

## ***Life's Countdown***

If we live 65 years, we have about 600,000 hours at our disposal. Assuming we are 18 when we complete high school, we have 47 years, or nearly 412,000 hours to live after graduation.

If we spend 8 hours a day sleeping and 8 hours a day working, that only leaves 8 hours a day for everything else. That amounts to 137,333 hours in each category. When we think of the time we have to work and play in terms of hours, it doesn't seem like much. And when seen in the light of eternity, it's but a fleeting moment. How important, therefore, that we spend our waking hours wisely!

The psalmist wrote (Psalm 90:12), *"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* I'm not suggesting that we need to start literally counting our days or hours that we have left. However we need to be aware of the swift passage of time and the need to live with eternity's values in view. Eph. 5:15-16, *"Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."*

The hours, days, and years are here and gone. So whether we count them or not, let's be sure to make them count — for the Lord. We can't afford to just spend our time; we must invest it.

**- by Shane Williams**

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## ***The Bible on Acceptable Worship***

*"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24).

Man must worship God. Worship is the expression of adoration, reverence and devotion. Worship may take numerous forms, but acceptable worship will take the forms prescribed by God. Jesus quoted Isaiah in Matthew 15:9, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Acceptable worship, as it is described by Jesus' statement in John 4:24, must be in spirit and truth. The instruction that we should worship in spirit is instruction demanding our minds, our attention, to that which we do. No mechanical recitation of prayer, no thoughtless singing of spiritual songs, no inattentive eating of the elements of the Lord's Supper: but concentration on that assigned significance of the thing being done, understanding that prayer is made TO GOD, that songs are being sung to make melody WITH THE HEART, that the elements of the Supper are to bring to mind the death of the Son of God. Yes, worship must be in spirit.

According to John 4:24, worship must also be in truth. God has not left us to ad lib our adoration, reverence and devotion. He has told us what to do and how to do it. He has given instruction, for instance, regarding our worship in the Lord's Supper, as to when and how often (Acts 20:7). He has given instruction regarding our worship in song, in prayer, and in giving of our means. And those who worship in truth will obey Him.

It does not matter if "it seems good to me." God is Spirit, and only as He reveals Himself can we know what is good to Him.

**- by Patrick Farish**

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## ***12 Evidences I Have "Lost My First Love"***

*"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"* (Rev. 2:4).

1. When my delight in the Lord is no longer as great as my delight in someone else, I have lost my "first love."
2. When my soul does not long for times of rich fellowship in God's Word or in prayer, I have lost my "first love."
3. When my thoughts during leisure moments do not reflect upon the Lord, I have lost my "first love."
4. When I claim to be "only human" and easily give in to those things I know displease the Lord, I

have lost my “first love.”

5. When I do not willingly and cheerfully give to God’s work or to the needs of others, I have lost my “first love.”
6. When I cease to treat every Christian brother as I would the Lord, I have lost my “first love.”
7. When I view the commands of Christ as restrictions to my happiness rather than expressions of His love, I have lost my “first love.”
8. When I inwardly strive for the acclaim of this world rather than the approval of the Lord, I have lost my “first love.”
9. When I fail to make Christ or His Words known because I fear rejection, I have lost my “first love.”
10. When I refuse to give up an activity which I know is offending a weaker brother, I have lost my “first love.”
11. When I become complacent to sinful conditions around me, I have lost my “first love.”
12. When I am unable to forgive another for offending me, I have lost my “first love.”

**- by Mark White**

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### **“The Whole Counsel of God”**

In Paul’s final meeting with the elders at Ephesus, he challenged them, encouraged them, charged them, and warned them. He expressed his own confidence in their knowledge of God’s truth and was certain that they understood the expectations placed upon them. He said: *“I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”* (Acts 20:26-27).

All who preach the gospel today should strive to accomplish that same task. Faithful preaching is not simply preaching that is free from error. While that is certainly important, more is necessary. The “whole counsel of God” must be proclaimed.

We need more than ‘spiritual pep-talks’ from the pulpit. While it is essential to deal with the positive themes of God’s love, grace, forgiveness, etc., it is also critical that we cover important doctrinal issues that are so often neglected. When brethren are not well grounded in these crucial matters, they are left vulnerable to false teachers “who will secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1). Paul warned the Ephesian elders that such false teachers were like “grievous wolves” and that they would “not spare the flock” (Acts 20:29).

Brethren should demand a balance of preaching that stresses indispensable truths of both a positive and negative nature. Let all be encouraged by the affirmative facts of God’s love and blessings. But let them also be strengthened against the assaults of the Devil whose “servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:15 – NIV).

After a typical sermon ask yourself: Did the lesson do more than merely entertain? Did I learn something? Was I stirred to greater faith and service? Was my understanding of God’s Word increased? Am I better prepared to live in the face of the great challenges that surround me? Can I say – as the preacher brings lessons from week to week – that “the whole counsel of God” has been declared?

**- by Greg Gwin**