

“YOU’RE DYING IN 6 DAYS”

By Bill Marianes¹

“I am very sorry, but you only have 6 days to live.” If this was your diagnosis, what would you do for those last 6 days? Take out a sheet of paper and make a list right now. Don’t wait, because the clock is ticking. I’ll wait for you to finish your list.

OK, what’s your plan for “getting your affairs in order.” If you’re like most people, you will want to prepare a Last Will and Testament and decide who will get your possessions. They won’t be yours anymore soon, and taking them with you is pointless. Imagine that. All that great “stuff” you once coveted, and worked so hard for, really won’t matter much anymore. Perhaps you’ll second guess the time you spent fretting about those “things.”

You will likely also be saying “thank you” to lots of people. All kinds of folks who unselfishly helped you, or who meant so much to you, will finally become the beneficiaries of your gratitude. Probably before the “Thanks” will come the “I love yous.” You’ll want to express your love to so many family members and close friends who were there for you. And now you have so much to tell them, and so little time. The flood gates will likely open with all the sentiments, advice, expressions of joy and admiration. You might even make some requests for forgiveness. And then you will understand how important it is to constantly tell people how much you love them.

And speaking of acts of contrition, guilt will inevitably set in. All the missed opportunities, all the “I’ll get around to it later” and “I don’t have enough time right now” memories will have you second guessing your previous priorities. Maybe you will become angry that you only have 6 days and counting down. You had so much you could (or should) have done, and there is no way to get it all done in less than a week. OK, God created everything in 6 days, but you are a mere mortal. You’ll probably think, “It just isn’t fair.” And then you will remember the many people who asked you “Who said life was fair?”

And as you realize you have less than 6 days left, you’ll conclude that there is no time for bitterness or regrets or feelings of unfairness or self pity. That’s not how you’ll want to be remembered. You need to get some really important work done before you rest, permanently. The one unanswered question you will keep coming back to is: “Why?”

Prayer will probably become a lot more important than it ever was before. You find yourself now doing what you didn’t do before your death sentence, namely praying “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner.” (I always add: “And remember me when you enter into Your kingdom.”) You will pray, and everyone will tell you that they will pray for you. You’ll wonder if anyone prayed for you before, and why you didn’t pray more? And then you will understand how important prayer really is.

And the clock never stops ticking, and time never stops passing, until it does. And then it’s too late. An old Chinese proverb says: “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is today.” So, if you’re “to do” list for the last 6 days of your

life is different from what you did today, then make a change and make a difference. Start today!

Thankfully, most of us will have more than 6 more days left, although the exact number is uncertain. Perhaps it's time we better prepare ourselves and our souls for our day of judgment. You can't change what you didn't do in the past. You can only change what you will do from now on. Since I believe: "Stewardship is what you do with the gifts God gave you" take this moment to reflect on what your stewardship legacy will be.

A critical element of every church or ministry strategic planning process the Stewardship Calling ministry leads, is a WHY discovery. Understanding the fundamental purpose for which the church or ministry exists and why anyone should want to join. This process is discussed in the great books by Simon Sinek: Start With Why and Find Your Why.

It is critical that each individual also discover and live their own personal WHY, the reason for their life and the reason to their life. In His Letter to the Ephesians 4:1 St. Paul clearly states "...*I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called...*" When one discovers and lives their callings, their life become more purposeful, joyful and filled with gratitude and grace.

In his powerful books, Halftime and Stuck on Halftime, Bob Buford suggests that we spend the first part of our life trying to be successful and the second part trying to be significant. The time in between is "halftime." During halftime, we figure out what our stewardship calling of significance is. So, I ask you, who's life did you help save? What church ministry did you devote yourself to? What acts of kindness did you extend to those who needed help? To what church work did you give your most valuable asset, your time, so that the mission of Christ's church on this earth could be realized?

It may be halftime for you. It might be your last 6 days. So, what's your plan, and what will you do now (and from now on)? Your Parish, Diocese, Metropolis, Archdiocese, Patriarchate and Christ's church needs you now more than ever before. Your stewardship of the 4 T's (your time, talents, treasures and tithes) is more critical in these uncertain times than ever before. And yes, the clock keeps ticking, and time never stops passing, until it does.

Do something today in gratitude for Christ's redeeming love and to help prepare your soul for salvation! God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. SOTPAETJ (stay on The Path, and enjoy the journey)

ⁱ Bill Marianes is the Chief Evangelist Officer of the Stewardship Calling ministry focused on helping people and parishes discover and live their stewardship callings so that they may have a good account before the awesome judgment seat of Christ. The always free www.stewardshipcalling.com website contains many resources to help churches and parishioners with stewardship, strategic planning, engaged discipleship, discovering your WHY, servant leadership, effective communications and church operational excellence. Bill is also a member of the Orthodox Ministry Services Team: <https://orthodoxministry.org/>. Bill can be reached at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com.