

This is the last year of my life.

No, this is not an announcement of pending mortality (yet it is always around the corner.) This is not an announcement of a life-taking disease – while every breath you take brings you closer to the end. (Not breathing also brings you closer to the end quickly.) This is a birthday announcement that says for the next 365 days (next year is not Leap Year – so it's 365 days) I am going to deliberately choose to live as if today is my last year. There is too much to do to try to live as if it is my last day – but I hope that I can finish the race I've been given – and finish it well within the next 365 days. And if I don't finish it then God may add days to the years to accomplish what He wants.

Living, as if it were the last year of your life, is not about age. It may actually be the best discipline for any age. If there is no “expectation” of next year, then I fill this year with everything of importance that I won't be around next year to deal with. This is a little like preparing to go on vacation. You finish everything this week that needs to be done because you won't be here next week to do it. This goes along with my theory that we should work only two weeks a month because the week after you get back you have to take care of everything that happened while you were gone. It is a great theory – unfortunately it doesn't work for schools!

Living this year shifts my priorities. It doesn't mean I quit living – taking a bath, going to work or other daily activities, or begin just living for myself but I look at what God has put into the horizons of my life – the opportunities, the people, the challenges. Why are they there and what am I supposed to do about them? This leads me to “intentionality.” There is no time for “drift” aimlessly going about. But you have to know the difference between your drift and who God “drifts” into your life. Living the last year of my life makes me more aware of people

and the power to bless and encourage. Now, maybe it is age when you begin to realize that your work, the ministry, might not be THE most important thing to God. That is a tough revelation for every hard driving minister or executive who has passionately poured their life into their ministry often sacrificing family, health and people to achieve their worthy goal.

As worthy as our ministries are there is no guarantee that their effectiveness will long outlive us. We hope, we pray we look for worthy successors and we put it into God's hands. Even for King David who had a wise son, Solomon, there was no guarantee. For every Salvation army ministry that continues you wind up with a Harvard or YMCA that moves away from its Gospel roots.

This brings me back to today – this year. I will continue to play games with the grandchildren, I will continue to take time (of which there is not as much left as before) and invest it into friendships and young people and causes and ministries that are true. I will intentionally spend the gold of the “golden years” in pursuit of what God wants – still wants – from my life. I will make every effort to finish what I have started – whether it is books or projects or the sharing of wisdom and knowledge and encouragement. I will try not to leave anything undone while realizing that I have no idea who God will put in my path tomorrow (who was not there today or last year) and continue to be His servant while I serve His people. Yes, the work we do is important, our ministries are important but even more important are not the results but the finish line where the banner echo's the most meaningful (to God and hopefully us) commendation – “Well done, good and faithful SERVANT.”