

## IF YOU ONLY HAD 30 DAYS TO LIVE

If you were told that you only had thirty days left to live, you would find this to be a very sobering, if not disturbing, statement, to be sure. You will likely not hear these words in your lifetime, but for the sake of participating in a valuable mental exercise, imagine the following scene: You are sitting dressed in one of those backless gowns in the examination room at the local hospital after spending all day taking a battery of tests. You are waiting for the doctor to come and give you the results of the tests. He finally walks in. You can tell he is having difficulty looking you in the eyes. The news must not be good.

He sits down next to you and finally looks at you and speaks, “The test results could not be worse. You have a very rare, incurable disease. It is already so advanced that what little treatment we do have would be useless, and there is no surgical procedure known for this illness.” He speaks your name and then slowly says six dreaded words, “You . . . have . . . thirty . . . days . . . to . . . live.”

The doctor then adds some extremely good news to his shocking pronouncement, “With the nature of this disease, you will have no negative physical manifestations until the very last day. It will happen all at once, and then it will be over. For the next thirty days, you will continue to feel and look like you do right now. You will notice no change in your current energy level until the very last day. No one will even be able to tell that you are sick.” You weigh his words carefully. You ponder, “I have thirty days to live on this earth before I go on to be with the Lord. Only thirty days!”

Your mind is swirling with the news that your days are numbered. Of course, your days have always been numbered, as is the case for all of us, but your actual number of days remaining has just been revealed to you, and it is several thousand less than you had been assuming. Once the shock finally sinks in, there is one penetrating question that comes to your mind. The question is this, “What will I do with my last thirty days on the earth?”

“Will I take this month to finally read those books I’ve wanted to read? Will I go spend these last precious few days with my children and grandchildren? Will I rush back to the office to finish that project that is already past due and absolutely must be finished within the next thirty days? Will I try to ‘mend some fences’ and ‘rebuild some bridges’ with people whose relationship with me has been broken or destroyed? Will I finally take that once in a lifetime vacation I’ve always wanted? Will I go see those people who have influenced and helped me most and tell them ‘thank you’? Or will I devote the rest of my days to giving back something of all I have received? And how will I prepare to meet my Father in Heaven?”

If you were to face a situation like this, the really important things in life would become obviously apparent. Under such circumstances, it would be easy to distinguish between what is urgent and what is important, what is real and what is superficial, and what is lasting and what is temporary. The great

tragedy for far too many of us is that life never becomes more precious than when it is just about over. Then, we hurry around and try to do what has been left undone, fix what has been broken, savor what has been overlooked, and give what has long been overdue.

Few of us will ever be blessed with knowing the exact number of days we have left, so we can “get our house in order” before we say good-bye to this life and those we leave behind. Can you imagine how our priorities might change if we really lived our next thirty days as if they were truly our last? Can you imagine how much more at peace we would be if we actually did those final things *now* instead of waiting until our last thirty days of life arrive?

A gentleman once spoke at a national conference and shared a lesson he had learned from his grandfather. His grandfather told him, “Remember, son, there will be a first time and a last time for everything.” He explained what his grandfather meant. When you kiss your spouse goodbye, there was a first time, and there will be a last time. When you take a walk through the woods, there was a first time, and there will be a last time. When you sit down to a meal with your entire family, there was a first time, and there will be a last time. When you put on your shoes each morning, there was a first time, and there will be a last time. When you hold your child in your arms, there was a first time, and there will be a last time. There will be a first time and a last time for everything.

Being ever mindful of this truth enhances our awareness of life and makes all the “in-between” times far more precious and meaningful. It gives a richness to everyday life that makes it so much sweeter. The fact is you will likely be experiencing a last time of something and not even know it until it has already passed. The speaker shared that this is what happened to him when he was a teenager and slapped his brother on the back and said “Goodbye” one morning before school. He did not know that he would never be able to say “Goodbye” to him again, because that day his brother would die in an automobile accident. Let me ask you, “If *you* had just thirty days to live, what would you do with them?”

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR — E. G. “JAY” LINK**

E. G. “Jay” Link has a unique combination of being an ordained minister with a Master Divinity degree in Biblical Theology and a professional Stewardship planning coach who for over 40 years has been working with very affluent Christian families to enable them to optimize their Kingdom impact with all that the Lord has entrusted to them to manage. After retiring from his personal practice, he then served for five years as Director of Taylor University’s Stewardship Planning Ministry, which he launched for them. Most recently, Jay founded the Stewardship Resource Group to serve Christian ministries, colleges, and churches to better minister to their highest capacity families. He has written six books, hundreds of articles and has provided extensive training curriculum for hundreds of professional financial and legal advisors in how to provide stewardship planning services for their clients.