



Week 1

LIVE

LIKE YOU WERE

DYING

TM

Staring Down Death

Death is the most inevitable event that we are least prepared for. There is great irony in this in that there is, for each of us, a hundred percent chance we will die. It could come at any time.



For the next 30-days we will take a journey that might change all that.

The Bible clearly states that we all have an appointment with death. Hebrews 9:27 ***"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment"*** (NASB). But instead of running **from** that appointment, as so much in our culture encourages us to do, we are going to run right **at** it. We are going to fearlessly stare down death and find out what changes when we do. We are going to let the winds from the valley of death blow back over our lives and stir us to something new.

This study has one goal: CHANGE. The change that will alter the course of your life. That change that you would only find if you knew that you were dying. You are!

This will take courage, but we have help in this: Psalms 23:4 ***"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me"*** (NIV).

We have company in this shadow.

There is no way we could have the nerve to face death—even hypothetically—if we didn't know that the Son of God had already stared down death and won. He's been there and back, and He is going to lead us right up to it, through



Notes—Week 1

it, and on to the other side. John 5:24-25 ***"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"*** (NIV).

Let's assume we now only have 30 days to live. *How would this knowledge change your priorities, values and dreams? How would it change the way you looked at people? What might you be emboldened to do that you have never done before? What would become important? What no longer matters?*

This experience will have different results for each person.

Someone might take that trip they've wanted to take for a long time. Another might learn to paint. Someone might discover that the words, "I love you" roll more easily off their



lips. Someone might reunite a broken relationship through the gift of forgiveness. Others might talk more freely about Jesus. It's unpredictable what exactly might happen because we're all

different and we will all interpret the message in a different way, but that's the beauty of it. It will be your way...how God inspires you. What happens in the next 30 days will be entirely up to you.

Are you ready to live like you were dying? Are you ready to take risks that you might not ordinarily take unless you knew you were dying? Are you ready to stare down death and grab a hold of life?

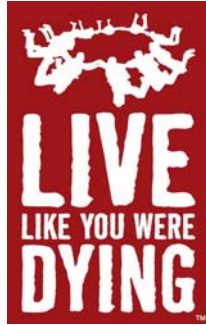
Death, False Alarms and Second Chances

Have you ever had a false alarm as to the whereabouts of someone you love? It can strike you anytime, like when you hear about an accident on the freeway that your spouse takes to work. You can't reach him/her on their cell phone. Or when your kids are out and sirens sound in your neighborhood. Or your mom goes in for a biopsy and now you are waiting on the results.

For a moment, in situations such as these, you live with the belief that something terribly bad has happened. Perhaps it hasn't—you can't confirm it either way—but your emotions have a tendency to assume the worst, so that at least in the area of your feelings, it's as if it has happened. Proverbs 23:7 ***“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”***(NKJV)

The challenging thing is how powerless we are to stop the flow of feelings and “what-ifs” in times like these. It's like trying to shut off a faucet stuck in the “on” position with a broken valve. You can pray, but you can't stop the flood of emotions.

Sometimes this can be good, even though it turns out to be a false alarm. For the moment that we feel this, we experienced life from a far different perspective. Suddenly that argument you had with your wife seems so petty. You regret the tone of voice you used to berate your children for not doing the chores. You start searching for the last time you told your dad you loved him and you can't remember.



4. As Gary got his second chance at life, he began to re-prioritize. He asked, “*God, what do you consider the greatest things on this earth?*” Jesus clearly answers that question. **READ Matthew 22:37-40.**
What does it look like for you to really love God and make Him your highest priority? If you had a second chance at life, what changes would you make to love God with all your heart?
5. One of the results of Gary's close encounter with death was a fresh hunger for God and his Word. King David in the Old Testament described a similar hunger for God. **READ: Psalm 63:1-8.**
Describe a time in your life when you were most hungry to know and experience God. What is your greatest roadblock to pursuing God passionately?
6. Gary closed this session with three things he focuses on each day to help him live out the Great Commandment of loving God and loving people. What practical steps can you take each day to fuel your “hunger for God”?

Live It Out

Here are 3 steps you could use to start your day:

1. Admit you are a beggar. Acknowledge that you can do nothing of worth without God.
2. Acknowledge God as the KING of your life. Embrace the truth that He is the master of your life and big enough to handle any and every need.
3. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help and power. Throughout your day, call on the Holy Spirit to guide you.

HomeTeam Study—Week 1

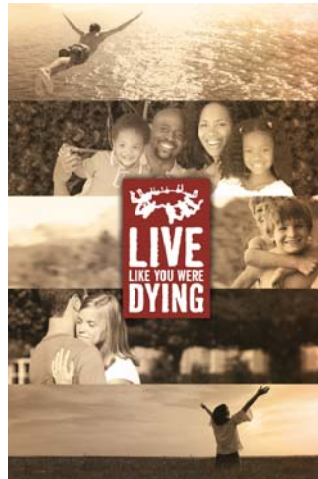
Before the Video

1. Suppose you only had thirty days left to live and you could take one final trip anywhere in the world. Where would you go?
2. If you had one month left to live, what would you do that you've never done before?
3. Before you start the video, take a few moments and pray. Ask God to come into your meeting, opening your hearts and minds.

Watch Video

Talk it Over

1. What is the closest you have ever come to death? Have you ever been with a family member or friend in their last days? How did those experiences impact you?
2. If you had been laying on the ground waiting for paramedics, what would have been going through your mind?
3. In his hunting story, Gary referenced this week's key verse. **READ: Psalm 90:12.** How would you define wisdom? What is the correlation between making the most of our time and growing in wisdom?



This is exactly the frame of mind we want to be in for the next few weeks. We want to live with the idea that we have only a month to live. *What would become important if you only had weeks to live? What would not? What will this false alarm do to your relationships and priorities? You have a second chance at life. What will you do?*

When the prodigal son returned home after blowing his inheritance, he was greeted with this: **“Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him,”** exclaimed his father after throwing his arms around his son. Luke 15:22-24 **“Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”**(NIV)

This father thought his son was dead, but it was a false alarm. For the son it's a second chance and this time he has a much different perspective. He's even willing to be a servant on his father's farm, just to be home. He has a whole new set of priorities. *What will your priorities be?*



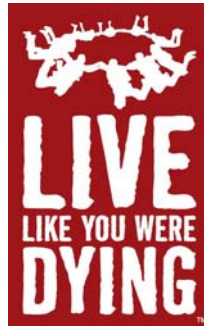
Time is Slipping Away

George was a staunch unbeliever. At 55, he found out he only had a short time to live due to pancreatic cancer, a particularly potent form of this dreaded disease.

Certain things began to change for George. He slowed down some, let his hair grow, became more frank in his speech (which was already pretty colorful), and became extremely belligerent. These changes did not escape the notice of his neighbor Ralph, who happened to be a Christian. Ralph liked George and wanted to share the gospel with him, but every time he brought up God George would get extremely angry and shut Ralph down. When Ralph decided to listen to George, in his rant, he found out that George had a son who died at the age of 5 from leukemia.

Truth of the matter is: none of us has very long to live. It's all relative. Paul calls us to live all the time as if the end is near. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 ***“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.”*** (NIV)

When we have an eternal perspective on life, according to the Apostle Paul's writings, it will govern our emotions and keep us from being defined by possessions and the desire



and value the most, and, depending on how able you were, you might want to try some of those things you never had a chance to do. (This is where the lyrics from “*Live Like You Were Dying*” come in.... “*skydiving, rocky mountain climbing, and trying your luck on “Fumanchu”*). *What would you do?*

Of course, what the song, “*Live Like You Were Dying*,” is getting at is a kind of second chance at life. Someone with a relatively healthy life might live longer, and yet never get around to doing half the things they might have done had they known earlier their life would be cut short.

L’Chaim is enjoying the presence of God and doing life with Him!

Acts 2:25-28

David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.” (NIV)



L'Chaim!

Jewish tradition has a phrase for living well: **“L'Chaim—to life!”** The phrase is not to a good life, to a healthy life, or even to a long life. It is simply to life, recognizing that life is indeed good and precious and should always be celebrated and savored.

L'Chaim!

All life is a gift from God.

Psalm 139:13

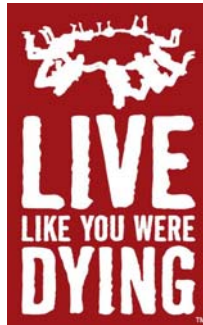
For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (NIV)

1 Timothy 4:4

“Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it. We may receive it gladly, with thankful hearts.” (NLT)

The love of life is not in conflict with loving God, because God is the giver of all that is good in life. To enjoy life is to enjoy God as the giver of all good things. A person who doesn't know God—even someone who doesn't believe there is a God—can still love and enjoy life. They just don't know who to thank.

If you knew you had only a short time to live, you would want to especially enjoy those things in life that you love



for more. If George had already gained this kind of perspective on life, the news of his terminal condition would have been a lot easier to take. According to the Apostle Paul, life is already short, and we are better off living with this reality in mind.

Paul would have liked the *“Live Like You Were Dying”* song. He would say that if you live like this, the following would be true:

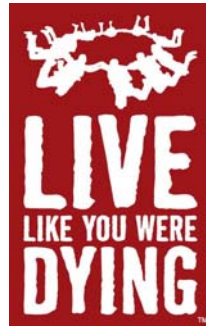
1. You would hold your most precious things loosely—even your spouse.
2. You would find your emotions tied more to God, in Christ. There would be hope for the future and love for those who are present.
3. You would realize that when it comes to earthly possessions, you don't really own anything.
4. You would use things to love people, not use people to get more things.

George is a real person. He did accept the gift of salvation after a Willie Nelson concert. Willie did a 20-minute set of gospel songs, all about going home to be with the Lord. Ralph was the one who invited George to the concert.



The Sky is Talking

Psalm 19:1-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.* (NIV)



Shhh....Listen....Hear that? It's the sky talking. And what's it saying? All kinds of stuff about God and everything He's made. It never stops. It's a praise song always playing, but we've gotten used to ignoring it. There is communication and knowledge bound up in the sky, the clouds, and the stars—it's streaming all over the planet 24/7—and we can learn to tap into it.

God's presence through his creation is something we have probably all felt at one time or another. It might have been a golden sunset, the power of the crashing surf, the wind in the high-mountain trees, or the beauty of a crisp fall morning. Sometimes, it can be so overwhelming you don't know what to do with yourself. But these are usually moments that take us by surprise. We didn't plan on it; the moment captivated us while we were on the way to somewhere else.

If you only had a month to live, chances are you would make time to go where you could hear from God through what He has created. Be intentional. Turn the sunset into an event. Take an evening walk with God. Make plans to

see a natural wonder you've always wanted to see. Take a hike into the wilderness. Walk through a garden. Sit out under the stars one night.

The important thing when you do any of this is to make sure you have plenty of time to just sit and be still. **Psalm 37:7** *“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.”* (NIV)

Let everything fade out except what God is declaring to you. What do you hear? What is God saying about himself through His creation? We have to train ourselves to do this. We might not hear anything at first, but don't give up. We are not used to silence so this will be a challenge. In fact, it is best to go off by yourself as Jesus often did. **Luke 4:42** *At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place.* NIV

Have you ever noticed when you are hiking with someone else the further you go the less you talk? Perhaps God is turning what seems to be a hike into worship. Our soul is sensing His presence. Can you hear Him?

Someone once said, **“It is not the number of breaths you take; rather, it is the number of moments that take your breath away that really matters.”**

