

Spending the Days of Your Life
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What if Uncle Sam issued a sum of money to each citizen at birth? You would know the average national allotment, but not how much you had been given. It could be average, above average, or below average. You don't know. But what you're issued is all you get. You can't earn any more. When you run out, you're out! And you don't know when your allotment runs out until that moment! I'll bet you would spend your money carefully!

But instead of dollars, think of days. If you live to be 70, you get about 25,550 (depending on leap years). You may get a few more, but you may get considerably less. You don't know when your allotment will run out. But once you spend one, it's gone and subtracted from your total. It can't be retrieved. Viewing time like that makes each day a precious gift that needs to be spent wisely. You never know how many more you will be given.

Studies show that the average American spends over 11 percent of his time watching television! In 70 years, that's almost eight years spent sitting in front of the tube! Even if you select only the best programs, I can't imagine anyone at age 70 looking back on your life and saying fondly, "I've seen some great programs in those eight years! What precious memories!" Come on!

It was a New Year's Day many years ago that made me swear off the tube. I got up and watched the Rose Parade, followed by the Cotton Bowl, the Rose Bowl, the Sugar Bowl, and the Orange Bowl. By the time I went to bed, I had probably spent 12 hours in front of the tube! I felt sated, as if I had eaten junk food all day (maybe I did that, too!). I realized that I had completely wasted the first day of that new year. I can't remember who played in any of those bowl games, let alone who won. I can't recall a single exciting play. All I know is that I wasted a day of my life. But, maybe it wasn't wasted, since it made me quit watching TV!

Over the years, I've never seen a single episode of *Dallas* (who cares who killed J. R.?), *Cheers*, *Seinfeld*, or *NYPD Blue*. Amazingly, I don't even feel deprived! My kids grew up basically TV free. We do own a set—we just rarely watch it. But as the kids were growing up, we read out loud through most of the Bible. We read C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* books, *Heidi*, and many other wonderful stories. My kids don't feel like something vital was missing from their childhood because they missed the inane sitcoms.

The apostle Paul challenges us, "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16-16). The Bible also affirms, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). None of us knows exactly when we will check out, but we can know for sure that we will stand before God and have to give an account of how we spent our lives. That's why Moses prayed, "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

I once read a fascinating account of a man who went into the Alaskan wilderness to photograph the beauty of the tundra. He made elaborate preparations. He had plenty of photo equipment, film, food, and emergency supplies. But he forgot one critical item: He didn't make any arrangements for the bush pilot to come back and fly him out! He waited, but no one came to his rescue. In November, 1981, he died about 225 miles northeast of Fairbanks. He had made elaborate plans for his stay, but none for his departure. Pretty dumb, huh?

But, how about you? If your allotment of days runs out this year, are you prepared to meet the holy God? If not, I recommend that you shut off the tube and read the Bible. It tells you how to live in a manner pleasing to God. In the light of eternity, you really won't care who won the Fiesta Bowl!