

Teach Us to Number Our Days

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Key Scripture

Psalm 90:12 (ESV) So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Sermon in One Sentence

To truly live a life that honors God and bears eternal fruit, we must grasp the brevity of our earthly existence and intentionally steward each moment for His glory.

Introduction

How many days do you have left? It's a somber question, isn't it? We tend to live as if our time on Earth is an endless resource, an inexhaustible well from which we can always draw. We put off important conversations, delay pursuing our deepest callings, and postpone spiritual disciplines, always assuming there will be a "tomorrow" or a "someday." Yet every sunrise marks one less day in our finite allotment, pushing us closer to that inescapable appointment we all share.

This human tendency to ignore our mortality leads to lives often characterized by distraction, regret, and ultimately, a failure to maximize the precious gift of time God has entrusted to us. We chase after fleeting pleasures, accumulate temporary treasures, and neglect the eternal. But what if there was another way to live, a way born from a sober recognition of our limited days, leading not to despair but to profound wisdom and purpose? This morning, as we turn to the ancient prayer of Moses, we will discover the vital lesson of numbering our days, not to dwell on death, but to truly learn how to live.

Historical & Biblical Context

Psalm 90 stands out in the Psalter as the only Psalm attributed to Moses, the great prophet and leader who led Israel through the wilderness. This attribution is crucial, giving us insight into its profound sense of human frailty and God's eternal nature. Moses wrote this psalm after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, watching an entire generation, including his brothers and sister, perish due to their disobedience. He had vividly experienced the devastating consequences of sin and the relentless march of time, understanding that for humanity, life is a vapor, a fleeting shadow, especially in contrast to the everlasting God.

This psalm is a prayer, a lament, and an affirmation of God's sovereignty. Moses contrasts the eternal, unchanging nature of God (verses 1-2) with the transient, fragile existence of humanity (verses 3-11). He understands that human life, however long it may seem, is but a breath in the vastness of eternity. His plea, "So teach us to number our days," is not a morbid fascination with death, but an earnest request for divine insight. It's a prayer born from a deep understanding that only when we grasp the brevity of life can we truly live wisely, purposefully, and in alignment with God's eternal will, making it incredibly relevant for our

fast-paced, often distracted lives today.

Main Point I — Recognize the Brevity of Life

Scripture: Psalm 90:3 (ESV) You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"

Moses, having witnessed countless graves dug in the desert sands, understood profoundly the transient nature of human existence. He paints a stark picture: God, the eternal Creator, dismisses humanity with a mere command, "Return, O children of man!" This verse isn't meant to inspire fear of death, but rather a realistic assessment of our earthly tenure. We are dust, and to dust we shall return. Our lives are compared to a fleeting dream (v. 5), a quickly withering grass (v. 6), a tale that's told (v. 9). The span of our years, even if we reach a robust eighty, is filled with toil and trouble, quickly cut off, and we fly away (v. 10).

This vivid imagery challenges our innate tendency to ignore our mortality. We often live as if we have an infinite supply of tomorrows, deferring important decisions, postponing reconciliation, or delaying spiritual growth. But by recognizing our finite existence, we are forced to confront the truth: each day is a gift, a non-renewable resource. This recognition isn't morbid; it's the gateway to intentional living. Acknowledging our brevity ought to ignite a sense of urgency, compelling us to use the time we have wisely, understanding that our true home is not in this fleeting world.

Main Point II — Seek God's Wisdom for Intentional Living

Scripture: Psalm 90:12 (ESV) So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

The core of Moses's prayer lies in this verse: not just to know our days are short, but to be taught *how* to number them so that we "may get a heart of wisdom." This isn't about counting days on a calendar with a sense of dread, but about discerning God's perspective on time, purpose, and eternity. A "heart of wisdom" in biblical terms is not merely intellectual knowledge, but moral and spiritual insight that guides one's actions and choices. It's understanding what truly matters in light of God's eternal truth and then ordering our lives accordingly.

When we ask God to "teach us to number our days," we are asking for His divine perspective on how to steward our time. We are requesting the wisdom to prioritize eternal values over temporal whims, to invest in relationships that matter, to pursue tasks that contribute to His kingdom, and to cultivate a deeper walk with Him. This wisdom helps us discern between the urgent and the important, between the fleeting and the eternal. It allows us to shift from a reactive, short-sighted existence to a purposeful, God-centered life, where every choice, every moment, is understood as an opportunity to glorify Him.

Main Point III — Live with an Eternal Perspective

Scripture: Psalm 90:17 (ESV) Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

The psalm culminates in a plea for God's favor and for the establishment of our work. This isn't a wish for earthly success for its own sake, but a desire for our labors to have lasting significance, to transcend our brief earthly lives and bear fruit for eternity. When we number our days with wisdom, our perspective

naturally shifts beyond the temporal. We begin to evaluate our actions, our pursuits, and our investments not merely by their immediate gratification or earthly reward, but by their eternal impact.

Living with an eternal perspective means understanding that our lives on Earth are a preparation, a proving ground, for the life to come. It means seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), knowing that these pursuits have eternal dividends. It means leveraging our gifts, time, and resources for the things that truly last: God's glory, the salvation of souls, and the building up of His church. When Moses prays for God to "establish the work of our hands," he is asking for God to imbue our efforts with His divine purpose, ensuring that our fleeting endeavors contribute to His everlasting plan. This shifts our view from accumulating earthly treasures to investing in heavenly ones, confident that what we do in Christ's name will echo into eternity.

Illustration

In the early days of Christianity, there was a saying, *memento mori*, "remember you must die." It wasn't meant to be morbid, but a profound spiritual discipline. Consider the monks of the Middle Ages who would often keep a skull on their desk or in their cell. To our modern sensibilities, this seems grim. But for them, it was a constant, tangible reminder of life's brevity. It fueled their spiritual urgency, reminding them that this life is a temporary pilgrimage. It wasn't to depress them, but to inspire them to live each day with God-consciousness, to pray more fervently, to serve more sacrificially, and to cultivate virtue more diligently. They understood that by remembering their end, they would better live for the ultimate beginning—eternity with God. This ancient practice, though perhaps extreme for us today, powerfully embodies Moses's prayer: an intentional recognition of our finite days leading to a heart of wisdom and a life aligned with God's eternal purposes.

Practical Application

1. Engage in Daily Reflection: Start or end each day by consciously acknowledging that it's a gift and possibly your last. Ask God, "How can I best steward this day for Your glory and my eternal good?"

2. Prioritize Eternal Investments: Review your schedule and budget. Identify where you're spending the most time and money. Are these investments primarily temporal or do they contribute to eternal values (e.g., spiritual growth, relationships, kingdom work)? Make intentional adjustments.

3. Practice Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Given the brevity of life, do not let bitterness or unresolved conflict fester. Reach out to those you need to forgive or with whom you need to reconcile, taking the initiative in love.

4. Cultivate a Legacy of Faith: Consider what spiritual legacy you are building. What values are you passing on? How are you discipling others? Identify one concrete action this week to intentionally invest in the spiritual growth of someone else.

5. Seek God's Will Diligently: In every major decision, ask yourself, "In light of eternity, what is God's will for me in this matter?" Pray specifically for wisdom to see life from His eternal perspective.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the modern world's emphasis on youth and success make it difficult to "number our days" and accept our mortality?
2. What specific areas of your life tend to consume your time and energy, and do these align with an eternal perspective?
3. What practical steps can you take this week to intentionally prioritize spiritual growth over worldly pursuits?
4. If you truly believed you had only a short time left, what changes would you make immediately in your relationships and your walk with God?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of life and the precious, finite days You have given us. Forgive us for our shortsightedness, for living as if our time is limitless, and for chasing after temporary pleasures. Sovereign Lord, teach us to truly number our days, not with fear, but with wisdom and urgency. Grant us Your divine perspective, that our hearts may be inclined to Your will and our lives spent for Your eternal glory. May the work of our hands be established by Your favor, echoing Your love into eternity. Amen.

Benediction

Now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Go therefore, and live wisely, numbering your days for His glory.