

# Voices: Find grace and beauty in numbered days

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I was preaching through Ephesians 5 a few weeks ago and came to verses 15 and 16: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” Godly wisdom directs us to watch our lives carefully and make the best use of our time. What does this mean?

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One answer to this question is found in Psalm 90:12: “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

To make the best use of our time, we should realize how short our time truly is. To live carefully, we should number our days. Godly wisdom is marked by knowing our own frailty and seeing each day as a gift from the hand of God, a gift of his grace.

## **Shocking reality**

Everything around us in our consumer culture fights against this wisdom. We have come to expect to live long, to live without suffering or sickness, to live with no thought toward death or dying. So, when suffering comes or when our frailty is made abundantly clear, we are shocked. We feel cheated. We blame God.

As American Christians, we live in such an affluent time with so many  amazing technological advances, we can live without a second thought about our frailty most days, most years. But life has a way of reminding us of our finiteness.

This truth always seems to be front and center in pastoral ministry. There are hospital visits to make and funeral services to perform. I can't escape the fact of human frailty. It is always right there. There are the phone calls in the middle of the night, the desperate visitor into the office asking for prayer, the congregant who has struggled for years with cancer breathing the last breath, the freak accident and everything else marred by this broken world.

### **Hard truth**

When the Apostle Paul tells us the days are evil, this is what he means. We can't escape the hard truth of the evil of this age, but we can live with wisdom.

We can number our days, living in the reality we are just a vapor. A heart of wisdom knows this truth, lives in this truth. Foolishness is living as if we are invincible, as if our days aren't numbered. Foolishness is being surprised at the suffering of these evil days.

Godly wisdom teaches us to number our days and to make the best use of the short days we have been given by living with thanksgiving. God's grace is all around us. God's beauty is all around us. In the midst of our fleeting days, we can see God's grace and beauty everywhere, and we can be thankful always and for everything as Paul says in Ephesians 5:20: "... always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### **Godly wisdom**

Godly wisdom tells us our days are numbered and instructs us to be thankful for each moment God gives. Be thankful for this day. Be thankful for this season, even if you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Be thankful for the grace and beauty of God that makes these evil days bearable.

God's grace is everywhere. It is there in the middle of the night in your tossing and turning. It is there in the doctor's office when the tests come back with bad news. It is there when you are on your knees praying for God to bring your son or daughter back to him. God's grace is there every single day.

God's beauty is everywhere, too. It is in creation all around us, from the flowers that bloom to the heavens filled with stars. It is in the eyes of my 3-year-old, who sees the beauty of this life in fresh ways, reminding me of God and his presence. It is in the faithful love of a spouse and friends, as well as in the fellowship of your church. God's beauty is there if we have eyes to see.

This life is short. Wisdom is accepting this frailty and living with eyes wide open to the grace and beauty of God filling each moment of these numbered days.

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