

# **"How Many Days Are Left?"**

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How many days do I have left?

A funny thing happened to me on the way to being 70 years old. The hair on my face is growing better than that on my head. What is that all about?

How much longer am I going to live? It is an easy question to ask. Not so easy to answer unless you are in prison on death row and all out of appeals.

It has to be an incredibly complicated process to go through the actuarial mechanics to come up with an approximation of a person's probable number of days. That number of days for each of us is not something we think about generally. We like to count years instead of days. That is a less precise and a "safer" marker. We have cakes, candles and celebrations for the passing of years.

We do have an uncertain lifespan on this earth to accomplish whatever goals and projects we might choose.

Some things we want to have happen will happen and some things we want to have happen won't. It is a fact. You can't do everything, you can't control everything.

So what are we aiming to do between now and the end? If we plan well we may accomplish some of our goals and projects. Clearly physical

constraints can determine what we do, but I think for most people it is the lack of well defined goals and a roadmap that prevents our success.

We hear it said that, "you can do anything that you want. Anything is possible if you work hard enough." While that may be good for encouragement, and it can help a person to aim for higher goals, it is also in many respects not true.

Pastor Rick Warren's book, **THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE**, suggests that there are 25,550 days for an average lifespan. As I am writing this I am about 30 days past that number. But this is not like worrying about a parking meter expiring. Although the comparison of a tow truck dragging my car away and the "Grim Reaper" coming at his appointed time do have some tempting similarities.

Have I done what I wanted to do with my 70 years? Have I done what was expected of me? Do I have regrets? Am I living on borrowed time after my expected 70 years?

Now it occurs to me that I have never been average. So maybe I will get to live more days than the average. Like most people I am in not in a hurry to die. You know that expression, "everyone wants to go to heaven but no one wants to die."

When is it that we actually begin our Purpose Driven Life? Some people decide on careers very early, but many people drift into college years with an "undecided" major. Even some of those who have a focus of interest will change their minds when they get into their studies. This is good, it is freedom of choice. I would say then that their chosen purpose driven life begins in college.

Oh dear! Does that mean that when we retire our purpose driven life is over? Can we change our purpose? People often times have to make career changes throughout life. Does a job change or a refocusing of one's career really mean we are changing our life's purpose? It might just depend on a person's perspective. For example: a goodly number of people die within a short time after they retire. So, if your whole reason for being is your job, then your purpose is gone at retirement.

Some people do find a way to repurpose their life and start a whole new career in retirement.

Imagine going to a craft fair and seeing a little old lady behind her display table of oil paintings. You could be forgiven if you thought "oh how cute." It might be easy to dismiss her since not too many really old lady types have made it big in the world of oil painting. But Grandma Moses began painting in earnest when she was 78 years old. Her full name was Anna Mary Robertson Moses. Her experience shows us that it is may not be too late to focus on a new purpose. Doing something she loved, she died at age 101. So she had a successful and historically significant Art career for over 20 years.

A Mr. John Chapman was born in Massachusetts in 1774. It was said that John liked wearing a tin hat and that he wandered all over our eastern continent from Ontario to West Virginia and out to Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. He died at age 80 and on his grave marker is written, "He lived for others." You will recognize his name from American Folklore as Johnny Appleseed. In addition to very strong religious motivations, John Chapman's purpose in life was to feed

people. Two hundred years later some of his trees are said to still be producing fruit. I am wondering, what have I planted that will still be producing fruit in 200 years?

My daughter-in-law's grandfather Mr."Chet" Schafer, who is 94 years old, continues to entertain our Chicago community with polka music over the radio. He has been doing it for a over generation. He has a love for people and polka music. He has a great reason in his retirement to get out of bed in the morning. With a modest recording studio in a back room he does what he loves, listening to music and recording his shows.

You can make your own list of historical figures who lived a Purpose Driven Life. It could include Mahatma Ghandi, Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Ben Franklin etc. It is well to note that many of the people who were focused and had an unbridled purpose in life were not necessarily very nice or ethical people. So sainthood isn't a requirement for performing or attaining your purpose driven life. That should be comforting for most of us. We all can't be a movie star or an astronaut. We can in humility and with the talents which we have been

given and developed live our own purpose driven life. *"When you are doing what you love, no one has to motivate you."* writes Pastor Warren.

So what is the purpose of it all? Our brief comings and goings seem to melt into the infinity of time and space. Are we essentially an endless geneology of names? Noticed but not notable. Can we be just random pavers on an endless road?

A partial quote from Emerson: *To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; This is to have succeeded".*  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson - writer and philosopher (1803-1882)*

If you are called to believe in an eternal life after death, then this life we have now is a "temporary assignment." It is an uncomfortable truth that naked we come into this world and just as bare we will leave it. Most of the things I have accumulated will be up for grabs in a garage sale for \$5.00.



Rick Warren's book addresses the question, "What am I here for. " It is a deeply spiritual book meant to be challenging to Christian believers. Each chapter heading in the table of contents could be a subject for an entire book...for example: You are not an accident, the reason for everything, What matters most, A place to belong, Cultivating community, sharing your life's message and many more.

The book is designed to be a workshop study guide but it does stand alone for individual readers who are not part of a study group.

I grew up in a Christian home and have been schooled in much of the material presented in this book. I value the spiritual aspects of Pastor Warren's book and recommend it to inform anyone curious about living a Purpose Driven Life.

Whether your are Christian or identify as something else, this book asks serious questions that thoughtful people will find useful. Pastor Warren has some good answers to those questions for us based on scripture.

