

# life groups discussion guide

## 01.08.17 – start the pursuit



*And I loved deeper / And I spoke sweeter  
And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying"  
And he said "Someday I hope you get the chance – to live like you were dying"  
-- Tim McGraw*

*I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying.  
-- "Andy" from Shawshank Redemption*

I am a big believer in intentionality. It's an undergirding concept that lays the foundation for the kind of life I try to lead. I've heard it said that few worthwhile things happen totally by accident. This is especially true when it comes to the development of our spiritual life. Sitting back and thinking that I will become the kind of Christian I want to be – that I was created to be – completely by accident is a dangerous way to think...and live.

It's a bit morbid to ponder, I suppose, but I may not be here next year, next week – heck, no one is even promised that they will be here tomorrow for that matter. Might it be, given the potential brevity of our lives, that the decisions we make today have an even greater impact than we can imagine?

I was having a deep spiritual conversation with my son just this past week and he told me that all of the things that wait him in the future can seem overwhelming – and they feel like they'll be here before you know it. I told him that when you're young it can be easy to trick yourself into thinking that the decisions you make today don't have a dramatic impact on the things that won't be coming at for you many years yet. But the opposite is true. The decisions you make today can have a fantastic impact on things that are years away from being manifest. I related that it was good to think about those things that are still years off. Think about the kind of husband you want to be. Think of the kind of father you want to be. Think of the kind of job you want, the kinds of friends you'd like to have, the kind of person that you want to be...and make decisions today that are in line with those desires. There are no assurances that the life you envision will unfold exactly as you plan, but the decisions of today are the foundation for the kind of person you will be tomorrow. And a building is only as good as the foundation it's built upon.

Q :: Do you have any moments in life when you made very intentional decisions that seemed rather ordinary at the time but turned out to have more profound impact down the road of your life?

Q :: Joyce Meyer once insightfully said that "many people want what I have, but they don't want to do what I had to do in order to get it." If there is a mentality that we want great things, but only if we can take a shortcut to get them, why do you think that is?

Q :: God seems to not be a big fan of shortcuts when it comes to our spiritual development (He even seems to intentionally delay things at times because He knows they will be better for us later). While having a "short view" of the potential brevity of life is good, what are some ways that we grow ONLY by having the "long view" (that things are developed over time – without shortcuts)?

Read Jeremiah 18: 1-10. I have long been a fan of the story of The Potter's House. Recently I felt that God was really driving home the truth of this story to me personally. While we all have bad decisions in our past, the truth is we all *still* sometimes choose the wrong thing. These verses in Jeremiah seem to be telling us that it's never too late to reverse course, and possibly even avoid some of the consequences of our bad decisions. They also seem to be telling us that our level of blessing is at least somewhat conditional on the choices we make.

Q :: How do these verses relate to and interact with the notions of living with intentionality and the idea that we never know how short life might possibly be for any of us?

King Solomon, the humble ruler who unselfishly asked God for wisdom, instead of the typical list of wants compiled by most kings demonstrated great insight with the teaching of the two disputing mothers and the baby. Yet he was also the one who, after he experienced all the pleasures life had to offer, then had the conviction to tell the world, “None of it matters.” It’s clear that wisdom, and the journey to acquiring it, can have many rollercoaster moments of highs and lows. One particular verse in Solomon’s writings underscores the idea of staying in touch in regard to life’s brevity. It’s one of those sayings that you weigh everything against. It’s found in Ecclesiastes 7:2. It says,

*It is better to spend more time at funerals than at festivals. For you are going to die and you should think about it while there is still time.*

You might be thinking, My Word! – what a depressing statement! Actually, it’s meant to be quite the contrary. That rather gloomy statement can cause us to continually reprioritize life when we develop the self-centered notion that somehow our lives are our own and that we can live it anyway we please.

As James reminds us in chapter 4, verse 14:

*...you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

This verse is certainly not one of those “name it and claim it” verses that we Christians might readily display on our fridges with a cute little magnet. But then again, why don’t we? Are we so in love with our lives or so deeply immersed in our pleasures that we cannot bare to be reminded that one day it will all disappear like a passing mist?

Q :: Why are we hesitant to keep the thought that this life is fleeting – and passing us by quicker than any of us would like – at the forefront of our minds?

Q :: If you knew that this time next year your life’s journey would be over, how would that impact the decisions you make between now and then?

I heard it said recently “Soon this life as we know it shall pass ... only what’s done for Jesus will last.” How then can we be sure that we are doing what we’re doing for the right reasons? I think the answer lies in being intentional, taking purposeful – and purpose-filled – steps toward what we already know God has called us to do, knowing that the follower of Christ I hope to be this time next year begins with the decisions I make today.

Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu famously said:  
“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

None of us are guaranteed to reach the end of the 1,000 mile journey of our life. Let us take the single step – which is the next one – with intention, purpose, and our eyes fixed on Jesus.