

One Month to Live #4 – Fighting for Peace

This is the last of a series called "One Month to Live". And we're asking ourselves how our lives would be different if we recognized just how brief life really is.

Our key passage for this series is Psalm 39:4-5, *"Lord remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, that my life is fleeing away. My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you. Human existence is but a breath."*

So how would you live your life if you knew you only had one month to live? One lady said she **wouldn't do another load of laundry**. She said **instead** she would spend time with her family and kids because life is not about laundry it is about relationships.

We saw some video two weeks ago about a fellow with Lou Gehrig's disease and we have some more video by him. What he told his children.

[Video] Larry: I know you struggled with a lot of things but I know deep down in my heart you will pull together and grow to be a wonderful man and I know that you'll find a passion in your life that will help guide you that you can look back on and everybody who knows you will be proud of you. Abby, you are a beautiful young girl, who needs to stop growing up. You know what I mean and I love you honey. You are a special person who brings joy to everybody and I'm so proud of the fact that you look at people for who they truly are. Josh, you are the funny man. Ever since you were little, I'd call you the tough one, Bubba and you have more jokes and more spirit and find humor in things that I couldn't even begin to imagine. Allie, you're the youngest and you're the loudest and you know what, I wouldn't change that for the world. You let everybody know you're there. You're not afraid to speak your mind and I wish that I had just a little bit of that ability and it will make you very strong when you grow up. You know Maureen, I don't think there is anything that I haven't already told you. I love you. I know you love me.

If you knew you only had one month to live, what would want to tell your children, your loved ones, the ones who are important to you?

We need to understand that life is about relationships and it's too short to live life without being connected to other people. Relationships are important to Jesus.

Listen to what Jesus has to say about relationships. Mark 12:31, He says, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength and the second is this, love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."*

God created us for relationships. God designed us to connect with other people but my guess is that some of us have relationships that are not what they should be. We struggle with consistently encouraging and speaking life into other people.

There may be some here today who have relationships that are broken, maybe **family** relationships, maybe with a **brother** or **sister** or **mom** or **dad**. Maybe with one of your **children**. Maybe you had a **friendship** that is just gone.

You were close but now it is gone. Now it's finished, maybe there was an argument and bitterness and a grudge and anger started to set in.

Let me tell you what God thinks about our relationships. If you ever begin to hold grudges and bitterness **read** these verses. Hebrews 12:14, *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men.”* And Ephesians 4:3 says, *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Make every effort to have peace with people. The word that is translated **“make every effort”** means to strive eagerly and earnestly.

Do you have a relationship that is challenged? God is calling you to fight for peace in that relationship. Don't worry about what they've done. Don't worry about what has happened. God is calling you and me to fight for peace in our relationships.

Now, some may say, **I'd just don't want to deal with it**. But Jesus says fight for peace. That means you need to deal with it. *“But Bob you don't know what they said.”* Your right, I don't, but I do know what Jesus said, He said, *“Fight for peace.”*

You can't control what other people say or do but Romans 12:18 says, *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* God is calling us to fight for peace. **But how do we do that?**

1. Confront humbly. Look at what Jesus says about relational reconciliation: Matthew 5:23-24, *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*

God is saying, *“If you want to worship Me, if you are trying to have a relationship with Me but you have a **grudge** against someone, or if you have a relationship that is struggling, **that is hypocrisy.**”* That is not the way it works.

Go and fix the relationship and then come back and worship and then we can have some time together, then we can have a relationship.

Do you think I'm stretching a point, and that isn't what you need to do; then consider this verse: Mark 11:25, "*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*"

Matthew 6:15, "*But if you do not forgive men their sins, **your Father will not forgive your sins.***" Can you go to heaven if your sins are not forgiven? You don't forgive, God will not forgive you. It is as simple as that.

Fighting for peace in your relationships can be tough. What usually happens is, we have a relationship that isn't where it should be and God says "*Forgive him, fight for peace.*" And we say, "*Lord, You don't understand.*"

"After what he did to me, there's no way, to fix this because, because..."
And He says, "*Fight for peace.*"

But Lord, You don't understand...And He says, "*Fight for peace.*" Be the man or woman who worships the Lord correctly by forgiving those who have offended you. And **it can be tough** to humbly go to someone who has offended you and fight for peace.

It was tough for me. Years ago, at the other church, there was someone in the church that I had been close to and people started telling me she was saying terrible things about me. And I didn't pay too much attention to it because I didn't believe this particular person would do such a thing.

But it turned out to be true and I felt betrayed. I was angry, I was mad and I didn't want anything to do with her. But the Lord worked on me and it took a few weeks but finally I went to where she worked and pulled up a chair to where she was sitting and told her. "***I offended you in some way, please forgive me.***" She immediately starting crying and threw her arms around my neck saying, "*I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.*"

And I'm sure that there are some here today that have relationships that **desperately** need healing. Maybe you are praying, "*Lord, help me heal my relationship with my dad, with my mom, my brother and I haven't talked for years, my sister and I are on the outs.*"

Or you had a friend and you were close once but your relationship is not where it needs to be. Usually, for the Lord to bring healing into your relationship where there is conflict, **confrontation** needs to precede the healing.

And maybe confrontation is not the correct word. But you have to face up to the situation; you have to meet with the person.

Most of us just want healing. Lord, just come and do Your magic and we'll all hold hands and the relationship and life will be wonderful again. But life doesn't work like that. Many times, to experience healing in your relationships you have step into the confrontation.

Many of us are scared of confrontation. My question for you is who or what do you need to confront. What is their name? What is the situation? Do it humbly. Don't do it out of arrogance or anger or spite. Allow God to go in front of you. **Who or what do you need to confront.**

Now, there is an exception to this, if you were abused, maybe as a child and what makes it even worse is that it was by a family member, then I'm not suggesting that it is the best thing to go to the abuser, it might be best to go to God and leave it with Him instead.

2. In fighting for peace, we need to **love deeply**. I don't think we have been taught very well what it means to love deeply. A lot of time our concept of love is taken from Hollywood.

1 Peter 4:8 says, "*Above all, love each other deeply...*" Above everything. Above your self-centeredness. Above your own lifestyle and your own comfort. Love other people deeply.

The word translated "**deeply**" is the Greek word Ekteino [ΕΚΤΕΙΝΟ] It means to extend yourself, stretch yourself. It was used with the **Greek runners in the Olympic Games**. And when they were running they would stretch themselves, push themselves so that they could win the race.

So, in this passage, Peter is saying, "*If you want to love deeply you have to stretch yourself towards other people and push yourself to a place of being uncomfortable.*"

While we are called to love deeply, many of us have **shallow love**. Someone makes us angry what do we do? We erect a barrier, they are no longer part of our circle.

God calls us to love deeply. Can you imagine having a love that literally covers whatever someone does or says to you? The Bible says that love covers a multitude of sins. And that is what Jesus has, His love covers our sins.

That's what Peter is calling us to. To love that way, when you're offended, when you're hurt, when you are the victim of gossip. Allow God to change you and begin to love deeply. Love like you have never loved before.

The question is, who do you need to love? Who are they? Who do you need to call today? Who do you need to encourage? Let's stretch ourselves and fight for peace.

3. Forgive irrationally. Forgiveness is hard isn't it? Colossians 3:13, "*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.*" There is a very **troublesome** word in that verse, it is the word "*whatever.*" Forgive "whatever grievances..."

How do you do that? There are people here who have experienced tremendous hurt. How do we forgive someone who has abused us? How do we forgive those who have beat us, have slandered us?

That seems like it is something that is impossible to do but then God gives us the answer, "*...Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*" Colossians 3:13

Think about that for a minute. What has God forgiven you of?

He's forgiven us of anger, forgiven us of lust, forgiven us of addictions, forgiven us when we cry out and say "*Oh Lord, forgive me I'll never do it again.*"

He forgives us, and then the next day what do we do, we do it again. "*Oh Lord, this time I'm serious, it's never going to happen again. I'm finished.*" The next day, we do it again. And He forgives us.

And, **because He's forgiven us, we have to forgive.** We can't live in hypocrisy. We have to forgive. We can't accept His forgiveness, and say "*Thank You, O Lord, for forgiving me but I'll never forgive them.*" We have to forgive.

During the last 30 hours of Jesus life He was arrested, He was betrayed by a close friend, taken to court, judged guilty for crimes He didn't committed, beaten, whipped, made to carry His own cross.

They put a crown of thorns on His head. They nailed spikes into His hands. They hung Him on a cross for the world to see and they laughed and they spit on Him and they made fun of Him. And what did He say? He said, "*Father forgive them...*"

In the example I gave where I went to the person and asked for forgiveness. That wasn't rational. I had not done anything to be forgiven for. But I did it anyway.

Forgive irrationally. And I have found that the less reason there is to ask for forgiveness the more powerful it is to do so.

Who do you need to forgive? What's their name? Who do you need to forgive?

Who do you need to ask their forgiveness? Maybe you're the guilty one. Maybe you're the one that hurt someone. You're the one that gossiped. You're the one that lied. You're the one that put other people in a difficult situation.

Who do you need to go to and ask for their forgiveness? Do it today. Time is short. We have a little bit of time left on this earth. Do not let another minute go by without asking for their forgiveness. Relationships. It's all about relationships.

The people in the video were told they only had a short time to live. And they were asked, **"What is most important to them?"**

[Video] Sherri: You know just the value of everything else is just gone. It's all for nothing and you read the Bible and you go to Church and you listen to the Word you know, and you talk about that. You can't take it with you and how you're not supposed to live, you know, for those treasures. Those are the wrong kinds of treasures.

Larry: If I were to get healthy today there is no job, no amount of money that would keep me from my family like I used to stay away. There's no sporting event that would keep me away from my family. That's probably my biggest regret.

Staci: You know, I think those things that I thought were urgent aren't all that urgent. You know, they're not, I don't know, I wanted to go to this place, I wanted to go here and travel there and I wanted to do this and do that and a lot of those things are important, I find their not what I'm missing.

Lionel: I was an awful dad for 40 years, 30 years totally lost until I found Jesus just four years ago.

Sherri: It's all for nothing. This means nothing. These clothes are for nothing. The shoes are for nothing. All you shoes, you shoes, shoes, shoes for nothing. You know, I just keep going around looking at it going, it's just all for nothing. The only thing that means anything are the people.

Staci: What's important is relationships, you know. And, the rest is not all that big of a deal.

Lionel: That's the most important thing in my life. God. It really is. I mean it might sound like a cliché or what people say, you know. I don't really care, you know. I know that I love God. I love Jesus. I love them. Everything I do is centered around Him. I don't care what it is.

Staci: You know, it's drawn my husband and I, I think a lot closer. I mean, I know that man loves me. There is no doubt in my mind that that man loves me. I mean he just puts up with so much and he's there and he thinks I'm beautiful even when I'm bald, you know. And, he's a good man.

Larry: To all my kids and my wife, there's only three words that I could say. I love you. We'll make that five words. I love you very much.

The Lord commands that we love deeply and what matters is that we are obedient. We do what God is asking us to do. He's saying **fight for peace**.

Confront humbly. Love deeply and forgive irrationally. He is calling you today to fight for peace. Will you be obedient?

God's calling you to stretch out and love people to a place that's uncomfortable for you. He's calling you to speak life into people. He's calling you to be an encourager. To affirm other people.

Maybe you have relationships that need healing. You're hurting and you're in pain and you're dealing with grudges and bitterness.

And ladies let me say this: Many women have been abused, maybe when you were a defenseless child and it was by a family member. And it wasn't always just the girls who were abused. It was a terrible thing to have happened and you are still wounded by it.

The person who abused you may have never admitted it or they may not even be alive anymore. But if going to the person who abused you opens old wounds or might even be putting you in harm's way again. Go to God instead.

I'm asking you to go to God to be released of this thing that is holding you in **bondage**. If you don't go to God and get His help to put this thing behind you, then, in essence you allowing this person to abuse you every day. For your own good and to obey God, **you have to let it go**.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that we would be obedient to your call. Give us strength, give us courage, give us wisdom, give us discernment, and give us the courage to be obedient to you. Heal our relationships.