

# Fifteen Years and Counting

by

Bryan Craig

*“In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, ‘This is what the Lord says. Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.’”*

*Isaiah 38:1*

I was recruiting men for our first Journey group in Tulsa, back in 2006. One man on my heart was Clark. I didn't know much about him other than that he was a successful businessman, 53 years of age, who was on fire for the Lord. He had been deeply touched by Bob Buford's book, "Half Time", and then, his heart was totally arrested when he went to John Eldredge's "Wild at Heart" Bootcamp in Colorado. Clark was a passionate, adventurous soul, not afraid to take risks, and this had served him well in business. He was drawn to The Journey when he heard it was a "journey to intimacy with Christ." In the midst of our Journey group, Clark was selling his oil business, cashing in on years of labor and vision, finally reaching the pinnacle of worldly success. However, as I watched Clark and got to know his heart, I learned that it was not the mountain home in Colorado, the country club membership, nor the luxurious vacations that made his heart come alive. No...it was the cause of Christ that brought Clark purpose. This was the adventure that excited him most. His passion for Christ led him to start a non-profit grocery store in the poorest part of our town, which included a 24/7 Prayer Room, a Discipleship training program, a Teaching Kitchen, a Mentoring Program, a 24/7 Prayer Room and a Church for the community. In 2012, Clark was diagnosed with Leukemia and went home to be with the Lord later that year. When Clark joined our Journey Group, neither he nor we knew he only had 6 years left to live. Those of us who knew him would say he went out on top!

Clark's story reminds me of the story of King Hezekiah, as referenced above. The king was given some disturbing news. He was told he was going to die. Here's what happened next:

*“Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, ‘Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: ‘Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father*

*David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.''" Isaiah 38:2-5*

I love this story as it relates to healing. It reminds us that God heals, but also that healing is but a temporary extension to life. We are all going to die, but sometimes God intervenes to give us an extension. I believe He does this to bring Himself glory and to fulfill a purpose He has in mind for us. In Hezekiah's case, we know that he was in the family tree of Christ, as was his son, Manasseh. (See Matthew 1) However, we read in 2 Kings 21:1 that Manasseh become king when he was 12 years old. That means he was conceived and born during Hezekiah's 15 year extension. Yes, God had an important task for Hezekiah to fulfill. All of this begs a question I've been asking myself:

*What if you only had 15 years left to live?*

What if the doctor gave you the news, "You are going to die, but you have 15 years left." Now, for some middle-aged men like myself or those older, this may not be that far of a stretch, but it is an important thought for all believers to ponder. I love the movie, *Groundhog Day*, with Bill Murray. An arrogant weatherman, Phil Connors, becomes the victim of a cosmic event which traps him in the same day over and over again. He has one day to live. At first, he chooses to spend that day in self-indulgence, revelry, rebellion and hedonism. Then, he realizes that this life only leaves him depressed and hopeless and he spends every day thinking of different ways to kill himself. Finally, his love for his producer, Rita, keeps renews his hope, but this pursuit also ends up leaving him frustrated. Only when he decides to live his one day for the benefit of others does he find peace. He helps a dying homeless man, saves a boy falling from a tree, changes a tire for some elderly women, saves the life of a choking man, counsels a struggling engaged couple and is a source of goodness and encouragement to the whole town.

If you are walking with the Lord, I know He has grabbed hold of your heart and filled it with passion and dreams. There are ideas stirring within you that seem impossible. The Lord is prompting you toward missions that benefit others, bring Him glory and fulfill your purpose. What is holding you back? Is it fear, is it selfishness, is it doubt? What if you knew you only had 15 years left to live? Would it give you the motivation you need to pursue God's plan for your life? I recently had lunch with a man who told me about his friend, Martin, a successful Norwegian business man. He was in his 60's and very ill, and while he lay in his hospital bed, he heard the Lord say, "I am a little disappointed in you, Martin. I really thought by now you would have done more for

the Kingdom.” Once got well, he spent the rest of his life focusing his energy and resources on the Kingdom. He planted a church in Russia, started orphanages in Africa and Sri Lanka, held a summer camp for underprivileged kids in East Texas, provided water systems for victims of the Haiti earthquake, and provided computers and air conditioning for an upstart Christian school in Pucallpa, Peru. The list goes on and on. Incidentally, Martin went to be with the Lord just shy of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, approximately **15 YEARS** after he heard from the Lord in his sixties.

Brothers, God is calling you to do something for Him. This could be the most important thing you do in your life. I close with a quote from another great movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, where Tim Robbins’ character, Andy, contemplates pursuing a new life of freedom or life behind prison bars. He comes to the conclusion:

*Get busy living or get busy dying.*