

Living Fully, Dying Well

Chapter 1: Living Fully

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **Opening Discussion**
 - When's the last time you talked about dying with anyone?
 - What prompted the conversation?
- **Reuben Job bio (1928-2015)**
 - 1952 – Minister in Evangelical United Brethren Church
 - 1968 – Denomination merged with the Methodist Church
 - 1977 – District Superintendent of Northern District in South Dakota
 - World Editor of *The Upper Room*
 - 1984 - UMC Bishop in Iowa
 - Chaired committee which revised the UMC Hymnal in 1989
 - 1992 – Retired
- **DVD – 8:13 (Reuben Job)** – [N.B., There's no problem if you don't have the DVD. Simply ask these questions alongside the Chapter questions as the book covers much of the DVD material.]
 - "God loves us as mothers love their children. God loves us as we are."
 - Have you come to this awareness?
 - *Recognizing that God loves others just as equally*
 - Do you consider life more precious now than you did 30 years ago?
 - Other reflections?
- **Scripture** – 1 John 4:7-11 (read aloud)
- **Chapter 1**
 - "I think all of us want to live the good life."
 - How would you have described it when you were in your 20s? Now?
 - How would your children describe "the good life"?
 - Have you yet reached the point where you're "cherishing every moment" and realize that "there's no guarantee about tomorrow"?
 - What do you consider to be your "inheritance" as a child of God?
 - *If you were to ignore a big inheritance, people would think you weird*
 - How would inheriting half a billion dollars impact your life?
 - How much more does inheriting salvation impact your life?
 - [13] Roberta Bondi's quote
 - What's the difference between God loving us and God liking us?
 - Do you think God likes us?
 - [14] "God loves all creation with that same intensity and unqualified love."
 - How does this temper your views on international relations?
 - [15] *"You are God's beloved, just as you are... Our inheritance as children of God is centered in God's character and love and is never determined by our achievements or failures."*

- When are you most aware of God's presence in your life? When are you least aware?

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Italics imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

Chapter 2: A Theology of Aging

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **DVD – 10:39 (John Collett)**
 - Have you had a specific experience that triggered you into the realization that you're aging (like an AARP arrival in your mailbox)?
 - How does thinking of God as "the God who is ahead of us" change your perspective on God?
 - Can you think of people you know who embody "living fully and dying well"?
 - Other reflections?
- **Scripture** – Romans 8:37-39 (read aloud)
- **Chapter 2**
 - What are your daily reminders that you're aging?
 - What are some of the things you can no longer do because of age?
 - What are things you are able to do now that you couldn't do earlier in life?
 - What things are on your "bucket list"?
 - [24] Romans 8:37-39 is mentioned as a common passage that people carry in their hearts to remember God's love for us.
 - What other scripture passages do you carry in your hearts?
 - [25] What do you think of the author's analogy of mid-years typically viewing life through a wide-angle lens while seniors are more apt to use a telephoto lens to zoom in on what is truly important?
 - Other reflections?

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Chapter 3: Our Culture's View of Aging

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **Opening Discussion**
 - Without any knowledge of a person, what age do you consider them to be old? 70? 80? 90?
 - How has this changed for you over time?
- **DVD – 7:57 (Rick Gentzler)** – ***Consider using alternate videos below instead...***
- **Video – 15:42 [YouTube – [Aging: It's Not What You Think](#)]**
 - Reflections?
- **Video – 4:08 [YouTube – [Millennials Show Us What 'Old' Looks Like](#)]**
 - Reflections?
- **Reflect on the following:**
 - TODAY survey from 2014 in which about 1500 adults ages 45-69 were polled, the 60-year-old demographic was overwhelmingly positive about their health. 14 percent rated it as "excellent," 61 percent rated their health as "good," and only 4 percent rated their health as "poor." 22 percent rated it as "fair." Additionally, nearly three-quarters of those in their 60's reported that they were "embracing" their age.
 - "I'm coming up on 60, which is a strange thing, because when you're a kid you think, 'Sixty, that's ancient!' And then you're actually living in a 60-year-old body, and yeah, it is kind of ancient! But I feel just the way I always have." – Annie Lennox as told to Yahoo Music, on turning 60 in 2014.
 - "I may be a senior but so what? I'm still hot." – Betty White, actress and television personality.
 - "Some days it rattles and shakes in there psychically, but ultimately I feel nothing but a great gift of life. There's nothing to prove. I feel comfortable in my own skin." – Pierce Brosnan, who turned 60 on May 16th, 2013.
 - "Age is strictly a case of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." – Jack Benny, comedian and actor.
 - "I'm sixty years of age. That's 16 Celsius." - George Carlin, comedian, actor, and author.
 - "I'm loving every minute of it...I'm very blessed. I thank the Lord every morning for letting me walk and talk and do what I get to do." – Country singer Reba McEntire on The TODAY Show in 2015.
 - "You are only young once, but you can stay immature indefinitely." - Ogden Nash, 20th-century American poet.
 - "At age 20, we worry about what others think of us. At 40, we don't care what they think of us. At 60, we discover they haven't been thinking of us all." – Eppie Lederer, 20th-century American advice columnist, under her pen name, "Ann Landers."
 - "Sixty. I'm turning 60 this month! I'm so glad I've lived long enough to say those words and celebrate their meaning. I'm turning 60. I'm alive. Healthy. Strong... I approach this milestone, the landmark of 60, with humility, supreme thanksgiving, and joy. Knowing for sure grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." – Fame talk show host Oprah Winfrey, as told to Oprah Magazine. She turned 60 on January 29th, 2014.

- **Chapter 3**

- [28] How has your life expectancy changed over the course of your life?
- [29] “When your mind seeks what your body cannot fulfill, you’re an older adult”
 - What falls into this category for you?
- Bali story of grandfather telling tree trunk top from bottom
 - What wisdom have you experienced from older adults?
- [30] How have you seen our church treating older adults?
- What changes do you see needed in today’s society in the treatment of older adults?
- [31-32 Bullets] Either...
 - Go through each to see which you feel you need to cultivate, or...
 - Choose 2-3 which call to you as in need of cultivation as you age
- Other reflections?

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Chapter 4: Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **Opening Discussion**
 - Imagine if you were retired as of Monday morning. What would be the first thing you'd do?
- **DVD – 8:12 (Reuben Job)**
 - In what ways are you better than you were as a young adult?
 - In what ways are you not as good?
 - What things do you look forward to doing more of in retirement?
 - What was/is retirement like for your parents?
- **Scripture** – Read Jeremiah 29:11-13
- **Chapter 4**
 - [34] Initial thought was that the purpose of growing older was to *stay alive!*
 - How do the phrases “purpose of living” over “meaning of life” differ?
 - What are your thoughts on the purpose of living?
 - [35] What new opportunities come with growing older (examples from book listed below)?
 - *Rearrange priorities*
 - *“We can pay more attention to Being rather than Doing.”*
 - Do you see this as true? How much time do you spend just being?
 - *Put things in order*
 - *Writing memoirs*
 - *Time to spend in silence, meditation, reading, and prayer*
 - *Enjoy the things you have*
 - *Resolve unresolved issues*
 - Compare your opportunities in growing older with those of younger generations.
 - [39] “Worry is the interest we pay on borrowed trouble, most of which never happens.”
 - [40] What new pursuits/hobbies/activities have you considered taking up in retirement?

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Chapter 5: Getting It All Together

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **Opening Discussion**
 - When did you first start doing any sort of estate planning?
- **DVD – 9:15 (David Jarvis)**
 - How are you working more at aging well?
 - “Active participation”
 - Examples you’ve seen of good and bad
 - How have you conveyed your wishes to your children? Written? Verbal?
 - In what ways have/did your parents make it easy for you upon their passing?
 - How are you learning from their example with your children?
 - What would your memorial service look like?
- **Scripture – Matthew 6:19-21**
- **Chapter 5**
 - How many of you have a will? Trust? Living will? Durable medical/financial power of attorney?
 - Do you have experience as an executor of a deceased family member?
 - Are you listed as a current executor for anyone?
 - What have you done to prepare?
 - Do you know where the documentation is? Financial information? Medical and funeral wishes?
 - How would you characterize a good enough quality of life for you as a senior?
 - What conditions would you consider to be significant enough to cause you to want to die?
 - Do you see yourself moving to a Continuing Care Center or staying at home with in-home health care?
 - Do you think God wants us to continue to extend life expectancy?
 - Other reflections?

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Chapter 6: Dying Well

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **Opening Discussion**
 - What does “dying well” mean to you?
- **DVD – 11:37 (Reuben Job)**
 - What are some unfulfilled dreams your parents didn’t achieve?
 - What classes or instruction have you had in dying?
 - Anything in church?
 - What practical matters about your death/funeral have you covered?
 - Burial plot; cremation; funeral service; open casket...
 - If you knew death was imminent, would you want to know how much time you had left?
 - What are your experiences with hospice?
 - Dying well is “gaining confidence that life in God’s hands is secure”
 - Have you felt such confidence that has eased your discomfort with death?
 - Reflections on the story of Job and his grandson?
 - Other reflections?
- **Scripture** – John 14:1-4
- **Chapter 6**
 - Why do we spend more time preparing for the birth of children than preparing for the death of loved ones?
 - Did your parents and grandparents die at home, in a hospital, or elsewhere?
 - Is our church reflecting the cultural “denial” Job describes in not discussing death?
 - Who would you like to be with you when you die?
 - At what age do you think children should be instructed about death?
 - When should they attend a funeral?
 - Other reflections?

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Chapter 7: What Happens When We Die

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **DVD – 10:22 (Reuben Job)**
 - What experiences have you had witnessing people dying?
 - Hallucinations?
 - Guests/visitors?
 - Visions?
 - Is fear the reason you don't talk about death?
 - With whom have you discussed the concept of death and dying?
 - Other reflections?
- **Scripture** – Hebrews 11:1-3,13b-14,16
- **Chapter 7**
 - [64] Story of death of child and Dr. Nels Ferré's response – "God is crying too."
 - Can you recall similar comforting responses?
 - Do you have experience with Stephen Ministry or another spiritual care practice?
 - If so, what do they teach for this scenario?
 - [67] Large number of near-death experiences (13 million in U.S.; 18 percent of those declared clinically dead in Dutch study)
 - [68] List of common experiences
 - Do you have personal experience with this in any way?
 - What experience do you have with hospice?
 - Signs of approaching death:
 - Withdrawal (people, food, TV)
 - Disorientation
 - Changes in the body
 - Have you witnessed these signs in those you've seen die?
 - Whom would you want present at your death?
 - What do you think of Job's "putting on my home clothes" analogy?
 - Other reflections?

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Chapter 8: How Then Shall We Live?

- **Opening Prayer** - Have everyone read the prayer from the beginning of the chapter together
- **DVD – 8:24 (Fred Allen)**
 - How have you witnessed the death of someone (parent) impacting a spouse?
 - Experiences with Rehab Centers or Nursing Homes?
 - Experiences seeing your parents as frail?
 - Have you witnessed music as therapy?
 - Do/Did you ever talk with your parents about death and dying?
 - Other reflections?
- **DVD – 8:05 (Harry Brunson)**
 - What resonated with you?
 - *3 Areas of Life:*
 - *Physical*
 - *Spiritual*
 - *Intellect*
- **Scripture** – Colossians 3:12-14
- **Chapter 8**
 - [80] “Living in Companionship with God”
 - Do you have a sacred place and time to be completely present with God?
 - Do you have an object that helps you focus? (cross, flower, Bible, etc.)
 - [83] “A Healthy Productive Life”
 - How do you keep your body active?
 - How do you keep your mind active?
 - What examples can you give for your service to others?
 - Other reflections?

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