

## **Make your “Fourth Quarter” count for God**

{Major portions of this topic are drawn from *Are You in the Fourth Quarter of Life: Embracing What Matters Most*}

Matthew Kelly and Allen Hunt in their book, *Are You in the Fourth Quarter of Life: Embracing What Matters Most*, use a football analogy to help their readers visualize the importance of living this phase of life wisely. They say if your age is between 61 and 80, you are in the fourth quarter of your life. And, if you are older than 80, you are in Bonus Time! So, using this analogy, which quarter are you in?



This book challenges you to use the time God has given you wisely, not only in the fourth quarter, but every day. To get started, you need to take a clear-eyed, honest look at where you are. This honesty will help you avoid the self-deception and denial that can lead to fourth quarter fumbles. You can't afford to waste time at this point.

By now, you would expect to have clearly established the meaning and direction for your life. Can you put it into words? \_\_\_\_\_

No matter how meaningful your life may be, you can still clarify your hopes and dreams for a better future. The book stresses the concept of intentionality, the act of being deliberate, as the key to successful fourth quarter living. They say, people don't accidentally age gracefully or don't accidentally leave behind legacies of hope, love, and encouragement for their families. No, all these things require a commitment to using the time you have left to grow in God's love and to share it with the people in your world.

There are examples throughout the Bible that reinforce the importance of knowing what our life is all about and how to use our spiritual gifts. {Matthew 25:31-46, The Judgment of the Nations} Pope Paul VI, Patron Saint of Vatican Council II, said "Somebody should tell us, right at the start of our lives that we are dying. Then we might live life to the limit, every minute of every day. Do it! Whatever you want to do, do it now! There are only so many tomorrows." Let's see why his words are so compelling.

One day, Kelly had lunch with several hospice nurses and asked them, "When people are dying, what do they talk about?" They told him that many hospice patients talk about how they wish they had lived their lives differently. Here are a few of the comments shared: "I wish: I had the courage to just be myself; I had spent more time with the people I love; I had made spirituality more of a priority; and I had discovered my purpose in life earlier."

When death approaches, the person you have become will meet the person you could have been. This can be a humbling encounter. It may help you analyze your thoughts, words, choices, and actions, to close the gap between who you are today and who you are capable of being. Then, with intention, follow the path that leads to a more deeply fulfilling fourth quarter. Don't make the mistake so many do by thinking I've worked hard to get to where I am today, can't I just sit back and leave things to the next generation? No!

The authors believe that our lives only genuinely improve when we continually grow in virtue, which leads to both personal and spiritual expansion, the hallmarks of human flourishing. The fourth quarter is a time to focus on character and that means growing in virtue. They go on to suggest choosing one virtue instead of many as the best way to achieve this goal. Here are some of the virtues they list: patience, kindness, gentleness, humility, and self-control.

Whether or not you are in the fourth quarter of life, you will meet God one day and make an accounting for your life's choices. Will the Master [God] say to you, "*Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.*" {Matthew 25:21} This is what we live to hear. We want to be faithful with the goodness, grace, talents, resources, time, everything God entrusted to us.

Hunt stresses the importance of using your life with intention. Take a clear-eyed look at where you are and be honest with yourself. Strive to be the man God wants you to be. Then, when death comes, you will be able to say, "Lord, I lived the fourth quarter of my life on purpose, with purpose, and utilized all my potential by sharing your love with others." You don't want to find yourself saying, "Lord, I need a little more time."

Based on what you do during this fourth quarter of life, what do you think God will say? "Well done, good and faithful servant", or something else? The answer will depend on how well you use God's gifts every day. The choice is yours.

**Reflective Questions:**

1. If you had to **choose one** of the following virtues to focus on in the fourth quarter, which would it be and why? Courage, faith, hope, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, humility, or justice? \_\_\_\_\_



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2. When you meet God, how well will you answer His question, "I gave you the grace of helping others, being an encourager, teaching, forgiving, etc. Tell me, how did you use these graces?"

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3. If you're uncomfortable with the possible answer to question 2, what might you change going forward? Be specific, generalities don't give you a way to evaluate your progress.

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