

Deadlines

Deadlines are all around us. We can meet them or not, depending on our inclination or motivation; nevertheless, they exist.

Our newspaper has a deadline for church news, and for my column each week. I have set my deadline even earlier, as I usually miss mine and am usually able to hit theirs. The circumstances of a pastor present many unexpected moments, and writing a newspaper article is just one of the many which I am fortunate (and am thankful) to be able to experience.

The deadline has its origin in time of war. Described as a line beyond which prisoners would be shot, it was a literal line in the sand, and provided severe consequences if it was crossed.

I consider myself somewhat of a reporter in many ways. I am seeking to update people on news from Heaven. I am proclaiming the good news of the Gospel so that people can find salvation, and grow closer to God and one another.

This column that you read every week is an outgrowth of that effort. An attempt, if you will, to get people to find eternal life before the earthly deadline of physical death arrives.

“The image of the reporter as a nicotine-stained Quixote, slugging back Scotch while skewering city hall with an expose ripped out of a typewriter on the crack of deadline, persists despite munificent evidence to the contrary.” Paul Gray

So, Paul Gray’s description of the reporter is an attempt to expand their image. Men and women, young and old, full time and part time, seasoned reporters and pastors with dreams, with many forms and shapes and goals, all drawn together by the image of the approaching deadline.

God set a sort of a deadline for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. “You can eat of every tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or you shall surely die.”

The time came, the deadline was crossed, and original sin was here in the world. There is no way now that we in our human minds can think the right things or do the right actions without God’s holy influence.

God offered a new “deadline”. He sent his son Jesus so that we can accept him as savior and make all other deadlines moot. The deadline for each person in the world is when or if we make that choice. The good news is that it can happen sooner or later. We as Christians pray that it will happen before it is too late.

There are many goals that we have in life. They have to do with family, employment, government, faith, and many other areas. We set deadlines for ourselves and others to do things that we want done, and then can get quite animated when our schedule is not met.

One of the blessings for me is that I am in a place where everything is possible. Another way of saying it is nothing is impossible. So the variety of actions, deadlines, and goals is infinite.

“Deadlines,” writes Adam Savage, “refine the mind. They remove variables like exotic materials and processes that take too long. The closer the deadline, the more likely you'll start thinking waaay outside the box.”

For me, that is true. Before the deadlines of elders agendas, worship bulletins, sermon preparation and planning of the year’s calendar and ministries, I am prompted to put up or shut up multiple times a week. The circumstances of life continue, but the deadlines come and go no matter what.

There are, to be sure, many delightful and world-changing moments happen when we are free of deadlines.

Carl Honore postulates “Your best ideas, those eureka moments that turn the world upside down, seldom come when you're juggling emails, rushing to meet the 5 P.M. deadline or straining to make your voice heard in a high-stress meeting. They come when you're walking the dog, soaking in the bath or swinging in a hammock.”

I would add that they might come in church, when we are reading the Bible, when we are praying, or on an outreach team for our church. For Moses it was when he was surveying his flocks and preparing to enjoy his time as a grandfather when he

was tapped to lead his people out of Egypt. Many miracles, a whole new adventure he had never planned.

For the disciples of Jesus then and now, God calls us to new and strange activities that the world will not understand. But the ideas and the calls and the deadlines keep flowing our way from heaven.

We must always keep the mission, to go and share the gospel with others, at the forefront of our thoughts and actions as a Christian. If there are deadlines which must be pushed back or ignored, then this must happen. What we cannot do is let our own deadlines and desires take the place of God's plans.

Well, I have to go. My deadline is approaching. Hope to see you in the newspapers.