

The Gift of Years:

Resurrection Eyes Bookmark Series

The bookmark series is designed to pro-voke [Latin: pro (forth) vocare (to call)]. The bookmarks are poetic in character, rather than didactic. They raise questions, rather than provide answers. There is plenty of room for your voice to be heard, your life to be shared. We hope these bookmarks will call forth significant and exciting discussion about life as it might be lived from decade to decade if we look at it through Resurrection Eyes.

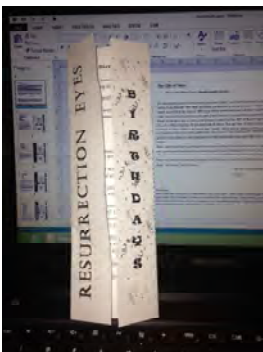
These bookmarks are a curriculum project created by the Gift of Years Project, sponsored by NBA and the Christian Church in West Virginia. All are welcome to them. You are free to select among them, arrange them as you see fit, and use as many of them as meets your needs. More will be added as time goes by. As noted above, this is a “literary” curriculum and not a closed, systematic curriculum. You may want to use it over and over. No fixed answers to questions are given, so revisiting some of the bookmarks may generate new experiences, new insights and new calls to action.

Make sure that all who participate have copies of each bookmark at least a week before the discussion. Also make sure each participant has access to all readings which are referenced in them. You may need to print materials for those who do not have web access, or for those who need big print copies of biblical texts.

Someone should be selected to guide each discussion, but the bookmarks are presented as a call to all to speak, to share, to explore, and to enjoy.

Rev. Dr. Larry Grimes

Author



Directions:

Each bookmark is designed as a half-sheet (8.5x11”) of paper.

- Print 2 copies of each page, then duplicate them front to back (so that the right-hand half of the page is on the exact reverse of the left-hand half). Be sure your printer does not resize or “fit to page”. Print size must be 100%.*
- After printing, cut them in two, and follow the directions to fold them on the dotted lines, which is the outside of the completed bookmark. The result will be an “double-door” opening on the front with the content of the bookmark visible when both panels are opened.*

Happy, Very Happy Birthdays To You and To Me

We've all go through a borning time
A borning time, a borning time.

The first, a bloody mess with loud screams,
An empty womb.
The second in cleansing water and holy light
The word "Beloved" hanging in the air.

The third, the final,
we must be borne
as we are born,
carried those last steps.
There our end is our beginning
the tomb as empty as the womb.

Larry Grimes

Read or sing the hymn: *I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry*
(Chalice Hymnal #75, or enter search at hymnlyrics.org)

- ◆ Do you celebrate the day of your birth in this world? How? How do you feel about birthdays, especially as decades go by?
- ◆ Do you celebrate the day of your baptism? Do you know the date? If so, how do you celebrate it? If not, what do you think about establishing that date as a "second birthday?" Read Romans 6:1-10. How would you celebrate this second birthday?
- ◆ Do you hold a celebration of the third birthday (death) of your dearest ones? Do you think it a good idea to celebrate this third birthday? How might you do so?
- ◆ What sort of birthday celebration seems good to you?
- ◆ Brainstorm! Create new family and/or church rituals.



These bookmarks, created by
the Rev. Dr. Larry Grimes,
are provided
as thought-provokers and
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RESURRECTION EYES

Does Life Die?

So, here's the question:
If life ends, and it does,
Does life die?

Can the holy breath of God die?
Can death extinguish it?
The breath that forms us
that informs us
and that shall, in the blast of the trumpet,
transform us: can that breath die?

Larry Grimes, November, 2013

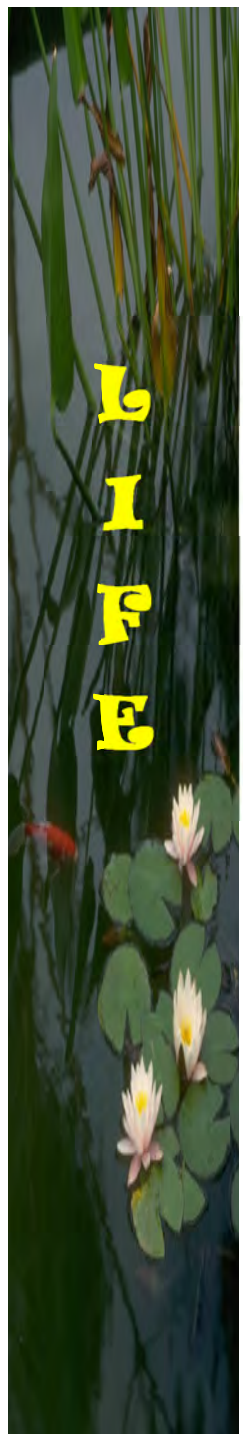
Read Genesis 1-4

Read John

What questions about our normal understanding of life and death are raised in the first stanza of the poem? How does the second stanza help you answer your questions?

Does the Genesis 1 creation account, read through the account of the Fall, provide any new ways of looking at life and death? Is the life God breathes into us always eternal life? Can God breathe anything that isn't eternal? So, then what is death? Where is its sting?

What do John's thoughts about life add to your reflection of life abundant, life eternal?



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RESURRECTION EYES

Fear

We have come to see it all in white
The cloth, the lilies, the light.
What then to make of the witness?

The tomb
The terror
The empty
The silence
And the last words . . .

“for they were afraid.”

Larry Grimes, October, 2013

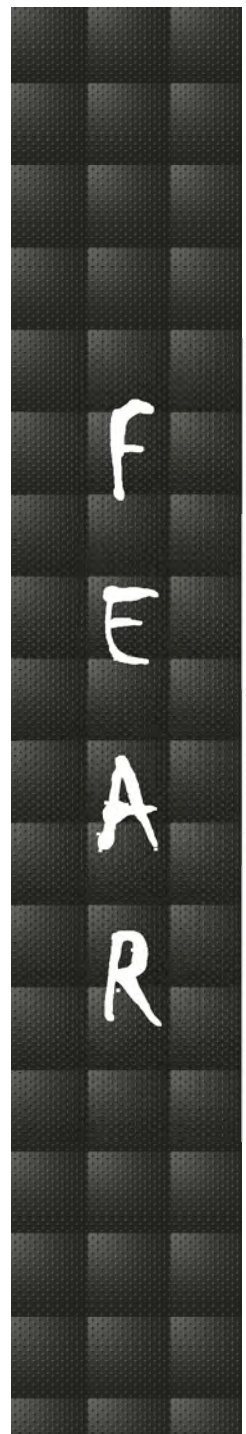
Read Luke 2:8-20 and Mark 16:1-8

Among the most repeated admonitions in the Bible is “Fear Not!” “Do not be afraid!” Again and again, in a variety of phrasings, we are told this. Do these admonitions make you a bit angry? Do they really quiet your deepest fears?

Among the most raw and jagged of human feelings is fear. It immobilizes us. It terrifies us. It diminishes us. Sometimes it seems to define us. It does not go away for long? Or can it?

So powerful is “fear” that even the empty tomb of the risen Christ does not banish it. Only after the disciples receive the Holy Spirit, only after they acquire the Resurrection Eyes it provides, do they cease to be afraid. How does this work? Or does it work at all? Is our fear of death the ground of all fear? If is our faith in resurrection the answer to all fear?

Fear and faith are not opposites. Let’s put our fears on the Table. I suggest this exercise: 1) count your many fears, 2) name them one by one, 3) Then step back and pray, “Help!”



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RESURRECTION EYES

Stages?

Let's blame Shakespeare!
Just a stage, life is,
and we mere actors there.
A soft whisper here, a scream against the air,
fury all around us, not that any care.

Such is life
born with protest in our lungs
then lulled to youthful trust
soon lost in life's trenches—
work that steals our time
hurts that bleed our love
dark days at noon-tide
long nights of toss and turn
a diminishment of dreams
a devaluation of our currency
a hitch in the gitty-up
and pain, there is pain
in the body, in the soul
from the flesh
from family and friends
we fail
we fade
then we are little known nor long remembered
to dust we return

Such is the stage, such are the stages.

Larry Grimes

Read William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II Scene VII. Spoken by the melancholy Jaques. (Search the title at en.Wikipedia.org)

Read John 11:21-27

How true is Jaques' description of the stages of "man," to life as you have lived it? Share your thoughts and observations.

For those who have been baptized into the body of the Risen Christ, how do the words of Jesus in John 11 provide an alternative to the stages of "man" described above? Explore other passages in John where he speaks of life, life eternal, and life abundant.

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RESURRECTION EYES

Water

The sharp edges of life
The nicks and cuts of fortune
The cutting blades of time

Bleed us of life. Severs us from kin.
Diminish our power. Drains us of hope.

All flesh pales
Shoulders stoop, skin sags,
Joints lock,
Bone grates on bone
Synapsis clot
The present dies
The past retreats
A dullness comes
A darkening . . .
And it is done
"It is finished!"

Until we who were buried in living water
Are also buried corruptible
—Ashes to dust, dirt to dirt—

Walk with me there will you
Beyond the sharp edges
Past the nicks and cuts
And whirling blades

Come to that edge with me
Where time gently bends

Larry Grimes, November, 2013

Read D. H. Lawrence, short story "The Odor of Chrysanthemums"
(http://letras.cabaladada.org/letras/odour_chrysanthemums.pdf)

Read Romans 6:3-11

Discuss the relation of your baptism to your understanding of living,
dying and resurrection.

Do you think that it would be good, psychologically speaking, if we
claimed again the family practice of preparing a body for burial,
including the washing?



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RESURRECTION EYES

The Ending

Let's begin at the ending.

Say after me:

"Death is not a disease that can be cured.

I will die. Dead as a doornail, I will die."

That is how it will end. I will die. You will die. We all will die.

Larry Grimes, September, 2013

Is this poem factually correct?

Does it speak the truth?

How are "truth" and "fact" different from each other?

Read Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"
(<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu>)

List the things (behaviors, decisions, etc.) that cause this family to
detour from the road that they thought would take them to
happiness?

Do you think they were on the right road to begin with? Why? Why
not?

Why does "The Misfit" choose "meanness" as his way of life? What
does his response to Christ have to do with his choice?

Looking at life and death with resurrection eyes, how is death as a
biological fact different from death as a theological fact?

How might we raise and educate our children differently if we
accepted at their birth the biological fact that they will die and the
theological truth that they shall have life abundant and life eternal?

We die
But death does not
Cannot
End life

TRUE _____ FALSE _____ Seen through what eyes?

E
N
D
I
N
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