

## God, Life, and Everything "Life Watch"

I hope you all had a good New Year's celebration. And now with the Feast of the Epiphany over (for those of you who celebrate it), there is a lot of winter ahead of us.

Dark, wet, unforgiving, depressing winter.

Which makes an article I read recently sort of oddly timed. It was about a watch that tells you when you are going to die. Or to be precise, it takes data about your health, history, and habits, then predicts how long you will live. Then it starts counting down.

That's it. On your wrist, you wear a constant reminder of just how long you have left on this earth. Rats! I should have gotten that for Christmas!

Now, you may ask yourself, "Self, why would I ever want such a thing?" The answer might be to help you appreciate life. You see, many of us cling to the idea of survival at any cost, that we forget to let go of our fear and simply live. We worry, we fret, we work hard to counter all the signs of age or infirmity - but we never smell the roses or sit with our loved ones.

Nor do we ever stop for a moment to consider what life means or what life after death could be like. We just survive.

That is one reason why the church actually spends a lot of time reminding us that we are not permanent residents on this earth. "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." That's how we begin Lent. Not because we're morbid, but because knowing that you will die can be liberating.

Knowing *when* you will die is something else entirely. This watch (it's called "The Tikker" by the way), predicts how long you probably ought to live, all things being equal. Life is so unpredictable that it's actually fairly meaningless other than serving as a reminder to quit smoking, eat a more balanced diet and get your exercise.

And yet, for many who have worn the watch, they experienced the exact opposite of liberation. They felt oppression. The constant ticking away of minutes of life, like sand in an hourglass. I immediately envisioned Dorothy trapped in the Wicked Witch of the West's tower watching the minutes she had left slip away.

Actually, a study of these wearers showed that many of them began feeling and acting much more selfishly. They hoarded time, and everything else along with it. They began ignoring the needs of anyone beyond their immediate circle, and many even disregarded those closest to them. The only thing that mattered was themselves.

Why was this so? Well think about it. I think if *I* got one of those watches, I'd probably watch it too much. I'd sit at my desk looking at it (instead of Facebook), never getting any work done. I'd be constantly thinking, "That's another hour gone. What good was it?"

Or maybe not. Perhaps knowing that you are going to die (or when) is only a problem for those who are terrified of death. Maybe after a few days, I'd just ignore the watch - even if it were absolutely correct in its prediction of my death date.

After all, who cares? If I'm alive right now, I've got something pretty good going on. And when I die, I believe I will be even more at peace, more content than now. There's uncertainty to be sure, but nothing about death frightens me (other than, perhaps, a slow, painful end). Even if I'm wrong, and there's nothing after this life,

that's hardly something to worry about. Simply ceasing to exist would mean not caring or feeling anything.

These dark, winter days can be depressing, but the contemplation of death does not add to the depression for me. Death simply is part of our journey in this world. I've got too much living ahead of me (no matter how long that might be) to worry about it.

If you wanted, you could take that watch, the Tikker, and give it a more positive spin. Rather than see it as a countdown to your departure from life, you could look at it as a reminder that you still have a lot of life left. For my part, however, I can't be bothered with it. As I said, I've got too much life to live for that.