

FOREWORD BY RICK WARREN

ONE
MONTH
TO

NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER

Live

THIRTY DAYS
TO A
NO-REGRETS LIFE



KERRY & CHRIS SHOOK

Praise for
One Month to Live

“Through the ups and downs, routines and regimens of our daily existence, we can become complacent, even bored, with life. But God never meant for life to be boring. And in *One Month to Live*, Kerry and Chris Shook remind us of the true depth and meaning that God has in store for each of our lives. No matter where you are in your walk with God, this book will reveal to you a fresh and much-needed perspective. And at the end of this thirty-day journey, you will discover exactly what it means to truly live—daily...creatively...passionately!”

—ED YOUNG, Senior and Founding Pastor of Fellowship Church and
author of *Outrageous, Contagious Joy*

“Too many people live with regrets, missed opportunities, and dormant dreams. You don’t have to be one of them. Your life will be different if you apply the transformational principles in Kerry and Chris Shook’s *One Month to Live*.”

—CRAIG GROESCHEL, Founding Pastor of Lifechurch.tv and author of
Confessions of a Pastor

“*One Month to Live* by Kerry and Chris Shook will add value to the life of every person who reads it. The questions asked and the ‘Make it Count Moments’ in this book will stir your soul and inspire you to begin, today, to make the rest of your life more meaningful. What Kerry and Chris present in *One Month to Live* could be life altering.”

—KEN BLANCHARD, author of *The One Minute Manager* and *Know
Can Do!*

“If you want new urgency, fresh purpose, and a sharper focus for your life, then this book is for you. Read it and your future may be changed forever!”

—LEE STROBEL, author of *The Case for the Real Jesus*

“Regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey, *One Month to Live* will challenge you to passionately live the life you were made for and leave an eternal legacy.”

—BILL HYBELS, best-selling author and Senior Pastor of Willow Creek
Community Church

About the Authors



KERRY AND CHRIS SHOOK founded Fellowship of The Woodlands in 1993 with eight people. Since then, the church has grown to more than fifteen thousand people, becoming one of the largest and most influential churches in America. Its main campus is in The Woodlands, outside of Houston, Texas.

Striving to eliminate the barriers that keep people from experiencing a relationship with Jesus Christ, Kerry and Chris believe that church should be engaging and life changing. They have touched thousands of under-resourced people locally and in countries around the world through the missions and ministries of Fellowship of The Woodlands.

Their weekly television program is broadcast to millions of viewers. It can be seen in all fifty states and more than two hundred countries worldwide.

Kerry and Chris have been married for nearly twenty-five years and have four children.

ONE
MONTH
TO
Love

THIRTY DAYS
TO A
NO-REGRETS LIFE



KERRY & CHRIS SHOOK



WATERBROOK
PRESS

ONE MONTH TO LIVE
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921
A division of Random House Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (AMP) are taken from the Amplified® Bible. Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (GNT) are from the Good News Translation—Second Edition. Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. Scripture quotations marked (God's Word) are taken from God's Word, a copyrighted work of God's Word to the Nations Bible Society. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (TLB) are taken from The Living Bible, copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (MSG) are taken from The Message by Eugene H. Peterson. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible®. © Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org). Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (Phillips) are taken from The New Testament in Modern English, Revised Edition © 1972 by J. B. Phillips. Copyright renewed © 1986, 1988 by Vera M. Phillips.

ISBN 978-1-4000-7379-5

Copyright © 2008 by Kerry and Chris Shook

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

WATERBROOK and its deer design logo are registered trademarks of WaterBrook Press, a division of Random House Inc.

Shook, Kerry.

One month to live : thirty days to a no-regrets life / Kerry and Chris Shook. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-4000-7379-5

1. Christian life. I. Shook, Chris. II. Title.

BV4501.3.S564 2008

248.4—dc22

2007042529

Printed in the United States of America

2008—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SPECIAL SALES

Most WaterBrook Multnomah books are available in special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please e-mail SpecialMarkets@WaterBrookPress.com or call 1-800-603-7051.

For Ryan, Josh, Megan, and Steven



*As we have raised you, in many ways you have raised us.
We pray that you will always live with no regrets.*

Contents

Foreword by Rick Warren	ix
A Note from the Authors	xi
The One-Month-to-Live Challenge	xiii

Day 1: <i>Introduction</i> —Living the Dash	1
---	---

Principle 1

Live Passionately

Day 2: <i>Roller Coaster</i> —Riding the Big Dipper	11
Day 3: <i>Time Squared</i> —Spending Your Most Valuable Resource	17
Day 4: <i>Power Surge</i> —Connecting with the Ultimate Source	25
Day 5: <i>Oxygen Mask</i> —Breathing First	33
Day 6: <i>Monkey Bars</i> —Risking Greatness	41
Day 7: <i>Dreamsicle</i> —Thawing Out Your Frozen Dreams	49
Day 8: <i>Kick Start</i> —Living Life Full Throttle	55

Principle 2

Love Completely

Day 9: <i>Heart of the Matter</i> —Relating and Not Waiting	65
Day 10: <i>Ocean</i> —Exploring the Depths of Forgiveness	73
Day 11: <i>Everest</i> —Scaling the Obstacles to Unity	81
Day 12: <i>Boxing Ring</i> —Resolving Conflicts by Fighting Fair	87

Day 13:	<i>Sandpaper</i> —Smoothing the Edges	95
Day 14:	<i>The Gift</i> —Thanking Those Around You	103
Day 15:	<i>Last Call</i> —Revealing Your Heart	109

Principle 3

Learn Humbly

Day 16:	<i>Star Power</i> —Discovering Who You Were Meant to Be	119
Day 17:	<i>GPS</i> —Finding Your Direction	127
Day 18:	<i>Hurricanes</i> —Withstanding the Winds of Change	135
Day 19:	<i>Metamorphosis</i> —Changing from the Inside Out	143
Day 20:	<i>Earthquake</i> —Building a Foundation That Lasts	151
Day 21:	<i>Mulligan</i> —Playing with Integrity	157
Day 22:	<i>Road Signs</i> —Experiencing a Personal Miracle	165

Principle 4

Leave Boldly

Day 23:	<i>Sandcastles</i> —Creating a Lasting Legacy	175
Day 24:	<i>Seeds</i> —Planting for the Future	181
Day 25:	<i>Sticks and Stones</i> —Using Eternal Building Materials	187
Day 26:	<i>Collisions</i> —Staying the Course When Your Life Crashes . . .	195
Day 27:	<i>Starfish</i> —Making a World of Difference	201
Day 28:	<i>Footprint</i> —Leaving a Lasting Impression	209
Day 29:	<i>Game Over</i> —Dying to Live	215
Day 30:	<i>Game On</i> —Living It Up	221

Foreword

Nothing focuses a person's priorities in life like learning he is about to die. Many of us would suddenly realize we have spent our lives on things that were not very important. So many of us waste our lives with "when and then" thinking, believing that "when" this or that happens, "then" we will really start living and do something for God that really matters.

That approach is guaranteed to leave you with regrets. At the end of your life, the only thing that will matter is whether you accomplished God's purpose for your life. Jesus was just twelve when He said, "I must be about My Father's business." Just twenty-one years later, He could say to the Father, "I have completed the work You gave me to do." If we all had that kind of focus and concentration in our lives, there's no telling what God would accomplish in the world!

The fear of death paralyzes most people, preventing them from taking the risks necessary to fulfill God's plan for their lives. Kerry and Chris Shook want you to grasp an amazing insight: embracing your mortality sets you free to live a meaningful and satisfying life without regret. As He did with Queen Esther, God put each of us in the world "for such a time as this." *One Month to Live* is a great way to discover the purposeful, joyful, abundant life God created you to enjoy!

Rick Warren

Founding Pastor, Saddleback Church

Author, international bestseller *The Purpose-Driven Life*

A Note from the Authors

If you only had one month to live, what would you change?

This book is unique in many ways. Foremost, as the title and the question above demonstrate, we're not afraid to ask hard questions. As our first book, one we've waited more than ten years to write, these pages carry the vital message to which we're devoted—how to experience life to the fullest by living passionately and purposefully, the way we were created to live. By embracing the fact that our time on earth is limited, we can live deliberately, no longer postponing the joy and peace that come from fulfilling our God-given destiny. Unless there's nothing you want to change about your life, we look forward to exploring with you what it means to experience the one-month-to-live lifestyle.

This book is also unique because of the way we've written it. Both of us, Kerry and Chris, consider our lives and ministry to be an equal partnership. Married for over twenty years and ministering together for the entire time, we truly function better as a team. As we've struggled and stretched, grown and celebrated, we've lived the message in these pages. Therefore, about half the experiences and insights we share in these pages came from Kerry, the other half from Chris.

For your reading convenience, however, the book is written in one, first-person voice. This avoids the confusing shift between "I" (Kerry) and "I" (Chris) and eliminates an unnecessary distraction from the vital message we want to share. By combining our two voices into one, we also want to emphasize that our message transcends all demographics. It affects both men and women, singles and couples, rich and poor, and people of all cultures around the world.

Wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to turn the page and begin answering this question that will forever change the way you live.

Kerry

Chris

THE ONE-MONTH-TO-LIVE CHALLENGE



I commit with God's strength to live
the next thirty days as if they are my last
so I can experience life to the full!

Your name

Partner's name

Kerry & Chris Shook

Kerry and Chris Shook

*Take the one-month-to-live challenge with a
friend and log on to OneMonthToLive.com for
daily encouragement from Kerry and Chris.*



Introduction

LIVING THE DASH

Death is more universal than life;
everyone dies but not everyone lives.

—ALAN SACHS

I am convinced that it is not the fear of death,
of our lives ending, that haunts our sleep so much
as the fear...that as far as the world is concerned,
we might as well never have lived.

—HAROLD KUSHNER

*y*our time on earth is limited.

No matter how much this idea makes you squirm, it's a fact. No matter who you are, how young or old, what measure of success you've attained, or where you live, mortality remains the great equalizer. With each tick of the clock, a moment of your life is behind you. Even as you read this paragraph, seconds passed that you can never regain. Your days are numbered, and each one that passes is gone forever.

If you're like me, you may be tempted to view this reality as harsh and unwelcome, to let it overwhelm and even paralyze you. But that's not my purpose in writing this book—just the opposite. I'm convinced that rather than inhibiting us

to play it safe, *embracing our time on earth as a limited resource has incredible power to liberate us*. Most of us, if we knew we only had one month to live, would live differently. We would be more authentic about who we are and more deliberate about how we spent our time. But such a contrast begs the question: *what keeps us from living this way now?*

My motivation to find the answer—and better yet, to live it and help you live it—is born in part from my experience in ministry. In this role I’ve been privileged to spend time with many people as they face the imminent end of their lives on earth. While many of them struggle through the stages of grief—shock, denial, bargaining, guilt, anger, depression, acceptance—most of them make radical changes as a result of their awareness of their terminal conditions. They take license to say what they really feel and do what they really want. They ask for forgiveness and forgive others. They no longer think only of themselves but reach out to those they love and let them know how much they mean. They take risks they would never have taken before and allow themselves to lay worry aside and gratefully accept each new day. They seem to gain a new clarity about their priorities, like their relationship with God and leaving legacies that will endure.

Over the years of watching others live out their last days, I began to ask myself, *Why can’t all of us live more like we’re dying? Isn’t that how we were meant to live in the first place? To discover what we’re made for and to utilize our unique gifts in the limited amount of time we’re given?* So last year at a staff retreat I tried a little experiment and asked our team members this question: If you knew you had one month to live, how would you live differently? I gave everyone a journal and challenged them to live the next thirty days as if they were their last and to write down what happened.

The results were nothing less than life changing! At the end of the thirty days, we all had a greater clarity of purpose and a renewed passion for the things that really matter. Many people did big, once-in-a-lifetime things, like going on a dream vacation to Hawaii with their spouse, finally getting serious about a healthy lifestyle and losing twenty-five pounds, or reconciling a relationship with a parent that had been neglected for years.

For me, the little, daily things took on a whole new meaning and forever changed my life. Taking my youngest two children to school every day became a real joy. I became keenly aware of what a sacred moment it is every morning to

play twenty questions with Steven and to make up silly songs with my teenage daughter, Megan. I made sure that I met my two oldest sons, Ryan and Josh, at their favorite restaurant once a week after school just to connect. Many of our staff members did whatever it took to be at all their children's ball games, recitals, and school events. At the same time, I noticed that the team was more productive than ever, wanting the things they did at work to make a lasting impact.

I've since come to believe that the one-month-to-live lifestyle is universal in principle but unique in its expression. If we all lived as if we had one month left on this earth, we would each spend our days differently, in ways unique to us, and yet I believe we would all experience more fulfilling lives that could leave a legacy for eternity.

One Little Dash

Perhaps no place echoes with eternity quite like a cemetery. Not surprisingly, I'm fascinated by old gravestones and the lives they represent. The dates on some of the old monuments and grave markers in the Houston area where I live go back to the eighteen hundreds. My imagination launches me into the various stories the markers tell. I find myself pondering what life was like in 1823 or 1914. I know people back then had the same problems and pain as everyone does in life, but I wonder if they felt as stressed and pressured as I do. Our technology and modern conveniences have revolutionized our twenty-first-century lives but at what price?

Looking at old tombstones, I can't help but recognize that entire lives are now reduced before me to two dates and one little dash. Some monuments include facts or sayings, Bible verses or poignant memorials, but each person's life really comes down to what transpired between those two dates. It comes down to what's in the dash. I look at the dash of a particular person's marker and wonder, *What did he live for? Whom did she love? What were his passions? What were her biggest mistakes and greatest regrets?*

When you think about it, we don't have control over many things in life. We didn't get to decide where we were born, who our parents are, or which time period and culture we face. We don't get to decide the dates on our gravestone. We don't know when our time on this earth will be up. It could be next week or next year or decades away. Only God knows. Our lives are in His hands. But there is one

thing we have a vast amount of control over. We get to decide how we're going to use our dash.

You get to choose how to spend that little dash of time between the two dates of your earthly existence. What are you spending yours on? Are you living the dash, knowing fully who you are and why you're here? Or dashing to live, hurriedly spending precious time chasing things that really don't matter to you? The psalmist prayed, "Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should" (Psalm 90:12, TLB). God wants us to realize that our time on earth is limited so we will spend it wisely. But He gives us the choice about how we spend this most valuable currency.

No Change Required

While many of the people I've known who are facing death make radical changes in order to die well, occasionally I meet some who change very little. It's not that they are unwilling to change. It's that they have lived so deliberately and so authentically that the news of the end of this life doesn't turn them upside down. Of course they grieve and struggle with the news. They ache for their families and the people they love. But they take comfort in knowing they have been living focused on what matters most to them: their relationships with the ones they love, their relationship with the God of the universe, and the fulfillment of their unique purpose on this earth.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to spend your life so that if you discovered you only had a month to live, you wouldn't need to change a thing? What's holding you back? What are you waiting on? Repeatedly in Scripture, God reminds us that our lives are short compared to eternity. "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14).

Of course I'm not encouraging you simply to live for today. Most of us can't afford to quit our jobs overnight, say what we're really feeling all the time, or act on every spontaneous idea. This kind of a lifestyle seems selfish and wildly indulgent and may indicate that such a person doesn't believe there's anything beyond this life. But life is more than what we know of it on earth. Even as we engage ourselves in the present, we must think through the eternal impact of how we live. The Bible tells us that God has placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). He created us in His own image as spiritual beings but in fleshly bodies. If we're

honest, most of us sense there has to be more to our existence than what this world can offer.

This is the point where many people turn to faith. But just as some people live like there's no tomorrow, others use their faith to live like there's no today. They're always thinking about heaven "someday" instead of fully engaging in life today.

The only way we can live for eternity is to embrace each day as a gift from God. We must live in the tipping point between the everyday and the eternal. He created us and has given us another day to live—to know and experience His love, to love and serve those around us, to live passionately the life He made us for. The temporal nature of our lives should keep our focus on what matters most.

Thirty-Day Challenge

Be brutally honest with yourself. *Your time on earth is limited. Shouldn't you start making the most of it?* If you knew you had one month to live, you would look at everything from a different perspective. Many of the things you do now that seem so important would immediately become meaningless. You would have total clarity about what matters most, and you wouldn't hesitate to be spontaneous and risk your heart. You wouldn't wait until tomorrow to do what you need to do today. The way you lived that month would be the way you wished you had lived your whole life.

If you knew you had one month to live, your life would be radically transformed. But why do we wait until we're diagnosed with cancer or we lose a loved one to accept this knowledge and allow it to free us? Don't we want all that life has to offer? Don't we want to fulfill the purpose for which we were created? Wouldn't life be a lot more satisfying if we lived this way?

I'm challenging you to start living your life as though you have one month to live, and I've designed this book to help you. There are four universal principles in the one-month-to-live lifestyle: to live passionately, to love completely, to learn humbly, and to leave boldly. I've divided this book into four sections or "weeks" accordingly, and I encourage you to live these next thirty days as if they were your last. For each day there's a chapter designed to help you focus on that week's principle.

Each chapter also contains two features to inspire your thirty-day life experiment. Throughout each chapter, you'll find "Make It Count Moments" with questions

designed to help you examine your life and focus on what's most important. The other feature, called "Make It Last for Life," comes at the end of each chapter and offers ways to act on that day's focus. These action points don't require homework so much as they inspire *lifework*, ways for you to personalize the material to your life. You may want to allow time to think through these items, to journal about them, and to pray about them. If you're reading this book with others in a group, then this will be a great place to focus your discussion.

Regardless of how you use this book, my hope and prayer is that you'll think seriously about what you want most out of life and what keeps you from pursuing it. I hope you'll embrace the fact that someday your life will come to an end so you will begin to live each day more fully.

You don't have to wait until there's a crisis to consider how you can experience life to the fullest. If you're willing to take this thirty-day challenge, be prepared for life to radically improve. You can live with no regrets and embrace a life so abundant you'll wonder why you ever settled for less.

There's no time like the present—right now!—to get started. Reading this book takes time, your most precious commodity, and I promise not to waste one second you spend on these pages. As you discover the life you were made for, today can truly be the first day of a life with no regrets. Claim today as the start of a month that's guaranteed to change your life!

Make It Last for Life

1. As quickly as possible, without thinking too hard or too long, make a list of five things you'd change about your life if you knew you only had a month to live. Choose at least one to begin changing today, right now.
2. Describe how you would like your life to be different at the end of reading this book. What drew you to open these pages in the first place? What's going on in your life now that has prepared you to think about who you are and why you're here?

3. Tell at least one other person—friend, family member, or co-worker—that you're reading this book. Ask that person to circle on the calendar the date for one month from today and to ask you then how your life has changed.

