



## CREATIVE CAMPAIGN SERMONS FOR ONE MONTH TO LIVE

### SERMON FOR EASTER: THE EASTER DOOR

(DISCOVERING THE PATH TO A "NO-REGRETS" LIFE)

- Suggested Video: Terrilynn McDonough—the woman who forgave her son’s murderer.
- Suggested Sermon Prop: A huge door with no doorknob on the outside; Big blocks made out of Styrofoam that can build a wall to represent the wall of regret; we will provide a picture of Holman Hunt’s painting.
- Suggested message outline is available should Pastors choose to use an outline for their congregants in the church bulletin.
- Pastors will want to have a picture of a door on the welcome card in the bulletin to refer to at the close of their message, offering congregants a way to respond with the letters A, B, or C. (If you choose to use this suggestion, be sure the offering is received at the close of the service following the message to gather the responses on the welcome cards.)
- Pastors will want to challenge their congregants to do the following throughout the One Month to Live Challenge:
  1. Take the 30 Day Challenge by asking the question every day, “*What would you do if you had one month to live?*” Note that this is a “clarifying question”. It will help to focus your congregants on the One Month to Live Challenge and clarify their priorities and purpose throughout the next 30 days together.
  2. Get into a Challenge Group and share the 30 day experience in community with others once a week. This could be in a home group, office group, coffee shop or Sunday School.
  3. Read a Chapter a day in the book *One Month To Live* and journal personal thoughts and experiences. These journal entries will provide opportunity to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings. Note that the book is written in 30 chapters to be read as a daily devotional guide for “your 30 day journey”.



## THE EASTER DOOR

(Discovering the Path to a “No-Regrets” Life)

*“The angel said ... ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said...’”* Matthew 28:5,6 (NIV)

(Adam) ... *“I was afraid and hid from you.”* Genesis 3:10 (TEV)

### 1. THE DOOR OF FORGIVENESS.

*“God says He will accept and acquit us – declare us ‘not guilty’ – if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we can all be saved in the same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like.”* Romans 3:22 (LB)

*“Saving is all His idea, and all His work. All we do is trust Him enough to let Him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish!”*

Ephesians 2:8 (MES)

### 2. THE DOOR OF RECONCILIATION.

*“... how incredibly great His power is to help those who believe Him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead....”* Eph 1:19-20a (LB)

### 3. THE DOOR TO HEAVEN.

*“This is the way to have eternal life – by knowing You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one You sent to earth!”*

John 17:3 (LB)

*“Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in.”*

Ephesians 3:17 (MES)

*“... We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that He has already thrown open His door to us!”*

Romans 5:1-2 (MES)

*“... I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”* 2 Corinthians 6:2b (NIV)



## The One Month To Live Challenge:

- **Ask the question everyday – “What would I do if I had one month to live?”**
- **Read a chapter a day in the book *One Month To Live***
- **Join a One Month To Live Challenge Group**

### MANUSCRIPT:

#### Intro.

- **Suggested Sermon Prop of a Door**

I know you've noticed there's a very large door behind us. Whenever you walk through a door you're going from one place to another and as you walk through a door you have certain emotions, depending on what's on the other side of the door. When you walk through some doors you may have a feeling of excitement. When you walk through other doors you may have a sense of familiarity. When you walk through other doors you may have a sense of fear. It all depends on what's on the other side of the door. I've noticed Chris and I can walk through the exact same door together and have the complete opposite feeling.

For instance, when we walk through the doors of Reliant Stadium to watch the Texans or Toyota Center to watch the Rockets or Minute Maid Park to watch the Astros – my heart starts to beat a little faster and I am filled with this sense of excitement. On the other hand when we walk through the doors of the mall – as soon as I walk through that door – I just get tired! I think there must be less oxygen or something in the mall because immediately it just wears me out. I say, “Honey, I'm going to the food court, I've got to sit down and take a break!” When Chris walks through the door of the mall, it just seems to energize her; she gets an extra bounce in her step.

Some of you when you walked into the doors of the church a few moments ago felt excitement – because you've been looking forward to celebrating Easter. Some of you when you walked through the door of the church felt anticipation – looked at the stage and were curious to find out what the service would be like. And some of you when you walked through the doors of the church felt a little apprehensive because this is your first time at FOTW and you were just a little nervous as to what will happen. And some of you who haven't been in church in a real long time felt extremely happy when you walked in and looked up and the roof didn't cave in!

The reason we chose a door as the prop for Easter this year is Easter is all about A DOOR!

Two thousand years ago, God walked through the door of human history. History is really His Story. This Easter we want to help you find your place in history. Easter is the focal point of all history. That's why 2000 years later over 2 billion people all around the world will celebrate Easter this weekend.

Let's go back 2000 years to the 1<sup>st</sup> Easter.

In Matthew 28:5,6 *“The angel said ... ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said...’”*

The reason Easter is a celebration is because Christ is alive. He's alive and He wants us to be fully alive. Irenaus said “the glory of God is a man fully alive.”



Howard Thurman said, "Don't ask what the world needs. As what makes you come alive because what the world needs is people who've come alive."

God wants you to live a passionate and purposeful life. One in which you're fully alive. But most people aren't fully alive. They're just going through the motions of life. Just existing, not really living! To see why we settle for less than God's best we have to go back to the first couple. Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were in this perfect environment – God said – all these doors I've created are open to you – you can walk through any door and enjoy life. There's only one door that is off-limits. There is one tree that you can't eat fruit from – what did they do – they went straight to that door and disobeyed!

This created a wall between human beings and God; a wall between God's perfection and our imperfection. A wall of regret –

- **Suggested Sermon Prop of "A Wall of Regret" made of Styrofoam blocks. You stack the blocks into a wall as you mention each regret listed below.**

-- that wall of regret causes us to be afraid of God and try to live our lives outside of his plan. In fact after they sinned look what Adam said.

Genesis 3:10 (Adam) ... *"I was afraid and hid from you."*

Our wall of guilt causes us to be distant from God and be afraid of him. Man's oldest problem – we all build stone walls between us and God. We build our wall with stones of regret.

Regret for the time you lost your temper.  
Regret for the day you lost control.  
Regret for the years you lost your priorities.  
Regret for the hour you lost your innocence.

One stone after another. One guilty stone after another. The wall gets really tall and it keeps us separated from God.

The Good news of Easter is that guilt is unnecessary! God put a door in the wall of guilt and sin!

The first door God provided at Easter is

**1. THE DOOR OF FORGIVENESS.** Romans 3:22, *"God says He will accept and acquit us – declare us 'not guilty' – if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we can all be saved in the same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like."*

When Christ died on the cross on Good Friday all guilt from the past could be cancelled.

Easter means there is a Door to Forgiveness for our sins. That's good news because nobody is perfect. We've all sinned. We've all made mistakes.

A lot of times we try to tear down the wall of regret ourselves. We try to get rid of it with good works or religion – rules – regulations – This just adds more guilt and frustration as we see clearly we can't measure up to a perfect Holy God and we don't have it all together.



God realized that we could never tear down the wall of guilt so he knocked it down on Easter and gave us a door to forgiveness. (knock down wall to illustrate what Christ has done)

Ephesians 2:8, says *"Saving is all His idea, and all His work. All we do is trust Him enough to let Him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish!"*

The good news of Easter is anybody no matter what you've done, no matter how far you've wandered, no matter how badly you've messed up, no matter how high your wall of regret and guilt is -- if you will stop trying to tear down the wall of guilt then you can walk through the door of forgiveness and come home!

Easter is not only a door of forgiveness it also provides us with a

**2. DOOR OF RECONCILIATION.** There was a recent movie out called *The Bucket List* and the characters that are played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman are told they're terminally ill so they make a list of all the things they want to do before they kick the bucket. *The Bucket List* is a lot of fun, it's a fun movie. They do things like sky diving, race-car driving and they travel the world. It seems to me that most of us don't have the money to do all those extravagant and crazy and expensive things that the characters do in the movie.

I've had the privilege of walking with many people at the end of their life when they found out they had one month to live or a few months left on this earth and it's almost never the big things that they have regrets over. I've never heard anyone on their death bed say if only I would have gone sky diving my life would have been totally complete and fulfilling. I've never heard that. But it's the little things that we neglect to do over and over again that we have regrets about. I've just been with so many people at the end of their life that had a lot of regrets over the little things, especially in relationships. I was talking to a pastor friend this week about regrets and he said, "Kerry, I'll never forget being called to the bedside of a very wealthy acquaintance of mine as he was about to die." He said, "This guy had millions in the bank. He had multiple houses and cars, but his kids hated him and his family had just fallen apart. All his money couldn't buy him out of this problem. His death was imminent. The full realization of the fact that he had wasted his whole life was hitting him full force." He said, "What can I do? I've blown it." My friend said, "Kerry, what do you say to a guy at that moment? Cheer up. It's no big deal." He said, "There's just not much to say. Of course I told him how to trust Christ so he could be in Heaven forever, but how sad that he came to the end of his life with all those regrets and he couldn't do anything about it."

We not only build a wall between ourselves and God we also build walls in our relationships. You have an argument in your marriage and it results in a slammed door and a wall goes up in your marriage. Or you have conflict with a co-worker – a wall goes up at work or you have trouble with a teenager – a wall goes up between parents and teenagers. We build these walls in our relationship and they make us feel distant.

It starts early in life and we build the walls with the stones of rejection and hurt. You didn't request these stones – you were given them as you go through life.

- You were given one the time you didn't make the tryout. You gave it your best shot but apparently the coach didn't think your best was good enough.



You don't have to live long to get a stack of stones of rejection.

- You make a poor grade
- You make a bad choice
- You get called a few names

The stones don't stop at adolescence

- You get passed up for a promotion
- You get hurt by someone you love

We build these walls to protect us from getting hurt and it hurts our relationships.

We guys are especially good at building these walls. I read my youngest son a children's book that really grabbed my attention. *The Knight in Rusty Armor*. It's about this knight that goes and fights these great battles. The knight is so used to wearing his armor that when he comes home he doesn't know how to take his armor off and his family can't get close to him.

We men are always out in the tough world fighting battles for our families – but when we come home we don't know how to take our armor off and be real and warm with our family. We build walls. We have to learn with God's power to lower the walls and let people in.

Because of Easter there is a Door of Reconciliation if we choose to walk through it.

Once you've walked through the door of forgiveness and there are no more walls between you and your creator – you get a real distaste for walls, and when you have a relationship problem with someone it bothers you. You want to reach out a hand. Be the first to call. You want to follow God's lead and offer a door of reconciliation.

How do I reconcile relationships? How do I forgive?

Eph 1:19-20a (LB) says, "... how incredibly great His power is to help those who believe Him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...."

The good news of Easter – the same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to help you in your marriage – to help you in relationship with your kids – to help you with the people at your work.

The same power is available to help you have a fresh start in your life – the power to forgive.

- **Suggested Video of woman who forgave her son's murderer.**



Remember because the tomb is empty our life can be full – He’s Alive!

We’re going to start a series next week to help you become fully alive – **“One Month to Live: Thirty Days to a No-Regrets Life.”** We’re going to encourage everyone in the church to take the 30-Day Challenge. That is to ask the question, “What would I do if I had one month to live?” Not because you’re going to die in a month. Lord willing you’re going to live many more years. But I believe if you’ll live the next 30 days as if it’s your last at the end of the month you’ll know how to really live!

This is going to be one of the most exciting months in the history of our church because we’re joining over 500 churches around the nation who will be going through this with us. Thousands of people will be taking the individual One Month to Live Challenge. Don’t miss out. We’re going to give out the little wristbands and we’re going to start living this lifestyle. We’re going to take the One Month to Live Challenge and live this month this way and it’s going to change our lives, change our community.

There’s one more wall we need to talk about. It’s a big wall and most people don’t talk about it much. It’s death. It’s a universal problem we all have because everybody dies.

Only a fool would go all through life unprepared for something he knows is inevitable. We may live here on earth for 60, 70, 80 years. No guarantees. But then eternity is forever! We live in an uncertain world with terrorism, war and disease but because of Easter God said you don’t have to be afraid of death.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Door of Easter is

**3. THE DOOR TO HEAVEN.** When we think of heaven we usually think of sitting on a cloud in a white gown strumming a harp. To me that sounds like the other place. How boring. The bible says heaven is a real place. The most beautiful, awesome place we can ever comprehend. We’ll have jobs to do that bring about total fulfillment.

Heaven is also a perfect place for perfect people. No body is perfect. Because of Easter there is a Door to Heaven.

John 17:3 says, *“This is the way to have eternal life – by knowing You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one You sent to earth!”*

A lot of people believe in the resurrection. George Gallup did a poll that said 84% of Americans believe Jesus rose from the dead. It’s a historical fact. I mean it wasn’t done in secret. The whole city of Jerusalem knew about it and eventually the whole Roman Empire. It was big news. If Fox News or CNN would have been around they would have had it live. There are at least 15 historical references to Jesus meeting people after He rose from the dead. Over 500 people talked to Him after He was raised. Jesus rose from the dead. The real question is what difference does it make in my life today? It makes all the difference in the world if you let it. The Door to Forgiveness, The Door to Reconciliation, The Door to Heaven one day.

Our set is based on the artist Holman Hunt’s famous painting – where Jesus is standing at the door of a cottage and he’s knocking. The interesting thing about the famous painting if you look closely you’ll see there isn’t a door knob on the outside of the door. There’s no door knob on the outside of our door. That’s because the artist wanted everyone to realize that we have to open the door of our hearts from the inside.

Ephesians 3:17 says, *“Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in.”*

Romans 5:1-2, *“... We throw open our doors to God and discover at the same moment that He has already thrown open His door to us!”*



I believe it's possible to live your life in such a way that when you come to the end you have very few regrets. I don't think anyone purposefully sets out to live a life that leads to a lot of regrets. I've never heard anyone say my goal is to have a thousand regrets when I die and I'm up to 569 right now. I'm still working on it. I've never heard anyone say that. It's just that we get stuck in what I call the someday syndrome and it becomes a trap. We say someday I'm going to get to that. Someday I'm going to do that. Now Chris and I always used to say, "Someday when things settle down." That was our famous line. We said it all the time. "Someday when things settle down we are really going to do those things that are most important to us." Have you ever said that? Who are you kidding? It never settles down. If you don't learn to enjoy life in the middle of the stress and the chaos, you'll never learn to enjoy life. If you don't learn to do the things that are most important in the middle of your stressful life, you'll never do the things that are most important because this is life. When are we going to wake up to the fact that someday is today. This is your someday. This is all we know we have. Some of you have been saying someday when things settle down we are really going to focus on the kids. Someday when things settle down we're going to put God first. Not unless you decide to put God first and to do those important things in the middle of your stressful life because things will never settle down. What I want to do today is point you to the most powerful word in the English language and it's mentioned twice in this verse.

2 Corinthians 6:2 *"I tell you, NOW is the time of God's favor, NOW is the day of salvation."*

NOW is the time. NOW is all we have. We're always looking for someday. We're always looking for that miracle someday, but the miracle is in the moment. The miracle is always in the moment because that's all we have. I'm going to ask you to open the door of your heart to Christ now. Don't wait.

- **Suggested reference to the Welcome Card where congregants making a decision to receive Christ may indicate it with one of the following letters corresponding to their decision. Pastor will want to lead in a brief prayer for the appropriate response listed below as a model for congregants to pray.**

**A** – For anyone wishing to **ACCEPT CHRIST** as their personal Savior from sin and prayed a prayer of salvation with the Pastor.

**B** – For those who have **ALREADY BELIEVED IN CHRIST** but have drifted from Him and want to restore that relationship with Christ.

**C** – For those not yet ready to make that decision to accept Christ but are **CONSIDERING CHRIST** and would like more information.

Whether you checked A, B, or C, I want to strongly encourage you to join a One Month to Live Challenge Group and take the 30-Day Challenge. I believe this will be the most life-changing campaign our church has ever experienced. If you live the next thirty days as though they were your last, you'll really learn how to live the life you were made for. Here's how:

- Take the 30 Day Challenge by asking the question every day, *"What would you do if you had one month to live?"* Note that this is a "clarifying question". It will help you to focus on the One Month to Live Challenge and clarify your priorities and purpose throughout the next 30 days.
- Get into a Challenge Group and share the 30 day experience in community with others once a week. This could be in a home group, office group, coffee shop or Sunday School.
- Read a Chapter a day in the book *One Month To Live* and journal personal thoughts and experiences. These journal entries will provide opportunity to share your experiences, thoughts and feelings. Note that the book is written in 30 chapters to be read as a daily devotional guide for "your 30 day journey".



## OMTL WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

### **EASTER WORSHIP SONGS**

- Crown Him With Many Crowns-Michael W. Smith
- Happy Day-Steve Fee
- Happy Day – Tim Hughes
- He Lives-Lakewood
- He Lives-Tommy Walker
- Here Is Our King-David Crowder
- He Reigns/Awesome God – Kirk Franklin
- For All You've Done – Hillsongs
- He Reigns-NewsBoys
- Jesus Is Alive-Ron Kenoly
- Let God Arise-Chris Tomlin
- Lord I Lift Your Name On High-Lincoln Brewster
- My Redeemer Lives – Hillsongs
- My Savior Lives – New Life Worship

### **EASTER SONG SPECIALS**

- Alive and Well-Cindy Morgan
- Arise-NewSong
- End of the Beginning-David Phelps
- Glory (The)-Avalon
- He's Alive-Dolly Parton
- He's Alive-Don Francisco
- Jesus Is Alive-Ron Kenoly
- Jesus Is Life-Steven Curtis Chapman
- Jesus Is Lord-Avalon
- Joyful Joyful-Michael W. Smith
- Joyful Joyful-Sister Act Two
- Keys Please (The)-Aaron Jeoffrey
- My Redeemer Lives-Nicole C. Mullen
- Once Upon a Time-Greg Long
- Rock That Was Rolled Away-Clay Crosse
- Sunday's On the Way-Carman
- This Blood-Carman
- Were You There-Selah with Russ Taff
- You Raise Me Up-Josh Groban
- You Raise Me Up-Selah

### **SONG SPECIALS-THE DOOR/FORGIVENESS/HEAVEN**

- Between You and Me-DC Talk
- The Door-Al Denson
- East to West-Casting Crowns
- Forgiven-True Vibe
- Heaven In the Real World-Steven Curtis Chapman
- History-Matthew West
- I Can Only Imagine-Mercy Me
- Ocean Floor-Audio Adrenaline
- To Forgive-Bruce Carroll