You're Never Too Old to Die Young

In a world that tempts you to chase happiness through self-centeredness, Hayley and Michael DiMarco shoot straight with you. Living for yourself will destroy you, and the only path to real life is through death to self. Here, the DiMarcos give you the rewarding (and sometimes counterintuitive) reasons for choosing to live for Jesus as you dig deep and bury yourself in Christ.

Others Who Decided to Die Young:

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DIETRICH Bonhoeffer

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Prologue

Lord, hast Thou declared that no man shall see Thy face and live? Then let me die, that I may see Thee.

Augustine
At the moment that I died my life changed forever. It was a slow, painful death—one that I didn’t see coming but felt with a persistent, gnawing pain—kind of like undiagnosed cancer. Sure I felt yucky, I was tired, worn out, and exasperated, but I didn’t see death coming. But when it came, boy, did my life change. Suddenly I could see more clearly. I could understand things I couldn’t understand before. All my fear, worry, doubt, and even stress were all gone. I was finally at peace, finally dead to this world and living for Christ.

I’m not talking about my physical death here; that hasn’t come yet, and I expect it to be even better than this, but I’m talking about the death to self that I experienced not long ago and can’t quit returning to. *Die Young* is about that kind of death, the dying-to-self kind of death, the “living sacrifice” that Paul wrote about to the Romans in Romans 12. This ability to deny yourself so that you don’t serve your desires over his—this is what dying young is all about.
The majority of my life has been me living for me. Even when I identified myself as a Christian, it was about the social aspects of my life or the fire insurance involved. My faith was all about keeping me alive and keeping Christ buried. It’s like Freddy Krueger or some other horror movie villain; every time you think I’m dead, my hand comes up out of the ground to dig my way out of the grave, looking to resume living my life on my terms (and usually to a grisly end).

My die young moment came when I started focusing on Jesus’s two great commands: love God with my all, plus love others, even the unlovable, as much as I love myself. This second command was masterful because Jesus knows just how capable we are of loving ourselves and how that’s not something that we need to be taught. Jesus didn’t say “love yourself so you can love others.” So to die young for me was to remove me as the center of my world and to put God and others in my place—loving and serving them as much, if not more, than I do myself.
“If I only knew then what I know now” is something everyone who has done any degree of living can say. Why must it take us so long to learn, so long to die? If we could only trust God and die young, die to our lusts, our idols, our obsessions, then we could see the fruit of that death so much earlier and find great gain. But when we put off the death that leads to life, we live with regret. Regret is a sad thing; it speaks of a life of mistakes, of failures, and of sin. But regret can be a thing of the past. It no longer has to be your condition, because today, no matter how old you are, you can die young. In fact, you are never too old to die young. If you think that you are, then you’re continuing to do what you’ve always done and assuming somehow things are going to change. Brilliant!

God wants you to die young today. He wants you to take up your cross and follow him. He wants you to deny yourself, to say no to the promptings of your flesh and of this world and yes to the promptings of his Spirit. To die young is to do all those things. It is to give up your right to yourself so that no one can be your master but God himself. A life that refuses to die to self is a life that refuses the very words of God: “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?’” (Matt. 16:24–26).
Introduction

To Die Young
Is To Live

When God calls a man, he bids him come and die.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Identification with the death of Jesus Christ means identification with Him to the death of everything that never was in Him.

Oswald Chambers
To die young is to live for Christ and nothing else, to be set free from the bondage of sin and self, and to live a new kind of life. Those who die young are emotionally bulletproof (or close to it), because they have already died to everything in them that another person could damage or break. In the 1800s, missionary James Calvert left for the Fiji Islands to share Jesus with the cannibals living there. The captain of the ship that brought him tried to dissuade his going by saying,

“You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages.” To which Calvert replied, “We died before we came here!”

Jim Calvert knew what it was to die young, and because of that he could do what other men were too afraid to do. His confidence was built on the fact that he had already given his life away, so no one else could harm him. His life, and the lives of those like him, are a shining example of the beauty of the death and burial of self.

When you die young, you give all of your needs, fears, worries, wants, hopes, dreams, and failures over to the One who can handle them. And you learn now, while your youth is fresh and your days are bright (if you’ve got
any days left at all), to start living like you mean it—to live out of the center of your faith, giving up your rights and your demands so that his will is all you see. When you live a life bent on dying to yourself and living for the Father, you live a life of purpose and passion, a life of hope and peace, and nothing can ever shake you or break you that isn’t the very hand of God himself molding you and shaping you into his own precious image.

When you die young you bury yourself fully in Christ. It’s the stuff of horror movies to be buried alive—scratching and clawing at the casket lid, gasping for air. “Buried” and “alive” do not go well together. The only good buried person is a dead one. So when we speak of burying yourself in Christ, we are talking about your “self” death. To remain fully devoted to your self-interests, your self-respect, your self-importance, and your selfishness is to remain alive in yourself and to serve yourself. But when you die young, you are able to bury yourself and live in Christ.

Think about it like this: When a man buries himself in his work, he puts all his energy into it and has little left for anything else. People bury themselves in things they hope will save them, but the only one who can truly be saved is the one who is buried in Christ. That is the gospel—the saving truth that Christ’s love was so compelling, so complete that he would give his own life for yours that you might have eternal life with him.

God wants you to die young. He wants you to die today to those things that promise to set you free but really keep you in bondage. He wants you to die to that obsessive need to please yourself, to comfort yourself, and to enjoy yourself so that you can live only to please
him. The idea of dying young is not an easy one. In fact, when the world thinks of dying young, they think of tragedy, of a life that was cut too short—and they are right. But dying young isn’t about ending your physical life but rather your self-life, and in that process discovering a more real life than you had ever imagined. Jesus promises an abundant life to all who turn from themselves and bury themselves in him (John 10:10). And that can be yours today if only you are willing to die young.

So as you work your way through this book, consider the idea that the life of faith is going to change you—because that’s what it must do. Many have said it, and let us join the crowd, “If God isn’t changing you, then he hasn’t saved you.” Let God start changing you today. Don’t let the status quo be acceptable to you; want more of what Jesus has to give, and let your life change today so that you may die young and live your life for Jesus.
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