

Friday, May 22

I believe God created in us the desire to celebrate special events and to record special times in our lives and in the lives of others. Yesterday, so many of you helped me celebrate my 70th birthday with cards, notes, emails, phone calls, text messages, balloons, chalk writing, and gifts. It was a memorable day for me – and thank you for being such a significant part of it.

In his best-selling book, *Don't Waste Your Life*, John Piper makes a passionate plea to avoid the dangers of a wasted life, calling us to make decisions and sacrifices that matter for eternity – with a single, soul-satisfying passion for the glory of God that seeks to make much of Him in every sphere of our lives.

I was prompted to reflect on the number “70” and explore what biblical weight it might have. I knew the number “3” represented divine wholeness, completeness, and perfection, which we see in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And I knew the number “7” also often symbolizes completion or perfection. God created the heavens and the Earth in six days, and, upon completion, God rested on the seventh day.

The number seven also indicates completion at the crucifixion where Jesus spoke seven statements from the cross at the completion of His earthly duties.

In Matthew 6, in response to the disciples’ request that Jesus teach them how to pray, Jesus spoke what we know as the Lord’s Prayer, and it contains seven petitions.

Jesus used seven metaphors to describe Himself as the only way to salvation. Each statement He spoke begins with, *I AM*: the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life, and the vine.

And when Peter asks Jesus how many times we’re to forgive each other, Jesus replies, *not seven times, but seven times seven*.

The walls of Jericho came tumbling down when Joshua and his army marched around the city once for six days and seven times on the seventh day with seven priests blowing seven trumpets.

And there are seven churches in Revelation to whom Jesus speaks words of warning and encouragement. “Okay, Fred, I get it. What about 70?”

After the flood, the world was repopulated through *seventy* descendants of Noah.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 tells us the Israelites were exiled in Babylon for *seventy* years.

In Numbers 11:16, Moses appointed *seventy* elders to help govern Israel.

In Exodus 24:9-11, Moses took *seventy* elders of Israel, along with Aaron and his sons, and went up Mt Sinai and ate and drank with God Himself. This tribunal of *seventy* elders was eventually called the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the ancient Jewish court system.

In Luke 10, *seventy* disciples were sent out by Christ on a “training mission” to preach the Gospel to the surrounding area.

In Exodus 1:5, a total of *seventy* Israelites, the offspring of Jacob, went down to Egypt and started the Jewish population there which later grew to over 2 million by the time of Exodus.

So, it seems to me that from a biblical perspective, you either want to be 3, 7, or 70. I'm 3 for 3 now, which means I'm also a 7 at the age of 70. Powerful stuff . . . and confusing.

Here's my bottom line for us: don't waste the years which God has gifted to you.

One of my favorite quotes which has guided my life for decades is from the secularist William James: "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it."

You can be any "number" to begin building that legacy.