

To the Leader: Copy the reverse side of this sheet so that each person at the meeting has access to a copy for the devotional period. This side is your script for the meditation which is outlined for your participants. Read it at the appropriate time. This side is NOT to be copied.

5. Dashes

Two neighbors who were discussing television. One said, "Name me two good things on your TV." His friend thought for a few moments and then said, "A clock and a book I've been reading." Since there is nothing on top of our TV I guess I would have to say that there is nothing good on ours. And yet, from time-to-time there are some interesting and worthwhile productions that come across the screen.

The other evening we were watching Jeopardy. One of the questions put before the three contestants went something like this: What punctuation mark is used to indicate the continuation of a sentence? One contestant gave "semicolon" as the answer. Another contestant said it was a "comma". The answer they were looking for was a "dash" (-).

I began thinking about the "dash". Our telephone directory is full of "dashes" placed between the numbers. If I were to call the U.S. Secret Service, I would dial: 1-317-269-6444. The three "dashes" tell me that the numbers belong together and all must be dialed if I'm to reach the U.S. Secret Service. Now, if I had the following: 332- I would immediately know that I do not have a complete number. The "dash" tells me something is to follow before it's complete.

All of which reminds me of the "lines" or "dashes" that one sees on the grave markers and tombstones out in a cemetery. I'm referring to the "dash" between the dates - the birth date and the day of death. Here, too, the little line or "dash" could stand for life, our earthly sojourn. Now, we have nothing whatever to do with those dates. Those dates are entirely in the hands of another, namely, our heavenly Father. I, for one, am most grateful for that. Leaving them in His hands we know that there will never be a mistake. David, the psalmist, said it: *My times are in Your hand.* As David looked back upon his life he saw the loving, guiding and protecting hand of the holy Lord God in every situation and circumstance. And as he looked forward, he knew that the omnipotent hand of his heavenly Father would guide and guard him until his final date was recorded. No small wonder he could write confidently, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Should we not have the same confidence and assurance? Nothing, nothing can happen to us without His permission. He is Lord. Our lives are in the hands of Him who lived and died that we might live eternally. Not only did the Almighty decide on our first date - the date of our birth, but He will also record our final date.

The important question is, What are we doing with the "dash" between the dates? In other words, what are we doing with the time allotted to each of us here and now? What are we doing with our lives? What is the purpose of our lives here on earth?

In His Great Commission He commands and promises: "Go...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

May we, in the power and strength of the Lord our God, resolve anew to make this life count as we live each day - not for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. How important is the "dash" between the dates!

Dashes

We Begin

L: This day, these minutes, Lord, we will spend in Your Name.

R: Our times are in your hands.

We Search Scriptures - Mark 6:53-56

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went --into villages, towns or countryside --they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

- What's on TV?
- How about a game of Jeopardy?
- What a dash tells us
- The dash for life
 - √ *My times are in your hand*
 - √ Nothing can happen without His permission
- What are you doing with your personal dash?

We Respond

L: When my life seems to be so busy every second -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

L: As the minute hand sweeps around our clocks so swiftly -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

L: During long hours of sleepless nights -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

L: As we begin each new day -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

L: While celebrating each year of life on my birthday -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

L: At the close of life, when you are calling me home -

R: Help me remember, *my times are in your hands*.

We Pray

Today, dear Lord, is among the days You have given each of us. It is part of the "dash" that represent the years on earth you allow us. Grant to each of us the joy of living each of these days in full assurance of Your resurrection. May we respond to your grace by showing love and caring to those near and far. In the name of the Timeless, Gracious Savior. Amen.

