

LIVING A LIFE TO DIE FOR

By Robert J. Tamasy

The English language has a phrase, "to die for." This basically means something is good beyond imagining. For instance, "The steak at this restaurant is to die for." It is so good it defies description.

Thinking along those lines, have you ever experienced anything you could say was "to die for"? Maybe it was food, a travel destination, or a spectator experience that surpassed your greatest expectations?

What about living **a life to die for**? For some that might mean immersing in favorite pastimes, such as fishing or golfing, music or traveling. Others might think of a life dedicated to the pursuit of wealth, or professional success and achievement. Each of those can offer a level of satisfaction, but in pursuing those alone, we might one day find ourselves singing the old song refrain, "Is that all there is?"

Living a life to die for, in my view, is one lived intentionally and purposefully, defined by an unwavering sense of mission. A life in which the person clearly understands who he or she is, why they are here, and feels propelled to fulfill that purpose. Ultimately, a life that influences many people in positive, life-changing ways. When that individual's life on earth is ended, an enduring legacy remains.

During my lifetime I have had the privilege of knowing a few people like that, but only a few. Recently my longtime friend, David Stoddard, founder of the non-profit I have worked for the past 12 years, went home to be with the Lord. Dave was one of those rare, larger-than-life people.

He had several distinctive traits – an ever-present smile, genuine humility, great kindness and generosity, a love for people, devotion to his family, and deep faith in Jesus Christ. The verse, "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21) aptly described Dave's life and his unexpected departure from this life at the age of 60.

When I met Dave about 30 years ago, he was an up-and-coming sales executive with a medical supplies company, on a fast track to becoming its top executive. It was worthwhile work, but he felt a calling to do more than sell stethoscopes and surgical equipment. So he resigned, accepting a staff role with CBMC. He oversaw the production of a training series called "Living Proof." Later, following his vision for having an impact for Christ in companies and corporations of all sizes, Dave started Leaders Legacy. In the 14 years he led the organization, thousands of lives were touched through his unique approach to mentoring, executive coaching, leadership development and team building.

He and I collaborated on his book, *The Heart of Mentoring*. Its subtitle described the mission he pursued: Developing people to their fullest potential. This encompassed not only professional and personal training, but also helping them discover how to relate spiritual truths to every aspect of their lives. At Dave's memorial service, dozens of people spoke about the life-changing impact he had on their lives. He would have been quick to point out it was God, not him, that did the changing.

The key for Dave, in business and investing in others' lives, was total trust and dependence on God. He understood apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5) and we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Here's a question for you: Are *you* living a life to die for?

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What in your view would "a life to die for" look like?
2. Have you ever know someone who seemed larger than life, who had a positive impact on everyone he or she met? If so, describe that person and the qualities that stood out to you.
3. How do you think a person goes about becoming that type of individual, someone who can be described as living "a life to die for"? Are *you* living a life to die for? Explain your answer.
4. The Bible describes the one who ultimately fits that description, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 states, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" What does this mean to you?

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

John 15:13; Romans 5:6-7, 6:4-11; 1 Corinthians 15:30-31; 1 Thessalonians 2:4-12