

DEEPER

Famous Last Words
by Dr. Curt Scarborough

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Dr. Curt is the founder and president of Pillsbury College & Seminary located in St. Louis Missouri. He has an extensive background in the field of Biblical education and has taught and preached around the country. Over the past 50 years, Dr. Curt's ministry has placed him in churches throughout Illinois, Texas, and Missouri. He is currently the president of FreeWay Foundation, a faith-based organization teaching biblical principles in the public school.



A Brief Biography of Dr. Curt Scarborough

- * Native of Benton, Illinois (son of a coal miner)
- * Married 50 years to RuthAnn Jent (Baptist pastor's daughter)
- * Both are alumni of Southern Illinois University and Southwestern Baptist Seminary
- * Curt & RuthAnn have two married children and seven grandchildren
- * The couple now resides in St. Charles, Missouri
- * Members of Morning Star Church, St. Charles, MO
- * RuthAnn: Preschool Minister, 35 years in St. Louis churches (retired)
- * Dr. Curt: Minister for 21 years in Baptist churches in IL, TX, and MO
- * Dr. Curt holds 5 earned and 2 honorary doctoral degrees
- * Joined FreeWay Foundation professional staff in 1975
- * President and CEO of FreeWay Foundation, 1983 - 2007
- * Founder and Chancellor, Pillsbury College & Seminary, 1991 - Present
- * Author of more than 90 books, including 5-volume commentary on all chapters of every book in the Bible (Expository Studies textbooks)
- * Hobbies: plays woodwinds; cares for retired racing greyhounds

I am praying for you today that our true teacher the Holy Spirit will come along side you and teach you as you study. It is my fervent prayer that God will bless you as you continue to develop your skills for studying His word, and that these lessons will ultimately result in you being able to bless others.

Blessings upon you as you study,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Curt Scarborough". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Foreword

Nathan Hale was an American patriot of the Revolutionary War who was hanged by the British when he was only 21 years old. With remarkable calmness of mind and spirit, he prepared for his execution. Before he died, he made a speech concluding with these “famous last words,” which have inspired Americans for more than 200 years: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

The last words spoken by a person take on added weight and importance. Often we hear these words at a wake or funeral, “Did he say anything before he passed away?” Even in a court of law, a man’s dying declaration is accepted as absolute truth on the theory that a person would not tell a lie with his last breath.

History always has honored the last words of a dying man. There is an assumption of deep honesty and conviction when we hear the words of someone about to die. These words can give insight into the priorities of the life that is embarking upon eternity. They seem to reveal the heart.

It is at this season of the year, often on Good Friday, that we pause to reflect on the last words of Jesus from the cross. During the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension, the Lord spoke many words, of course. But the “seven last sayings” are particularly poignant, even though we know the rest of the story . . .
Easter is coming!

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Personal Application: Our Last Words on Earth

#1: A Word of Forgiveness for Enemies

I. Concentration: on Luke 23:34

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

II. Meditation: on who were the “them” and “they” Jesus prayed about

1. They” were the soldiers who mocked him., Lk. 23:34, 36.
(Compare with Lk. 22:63-65 and Matt. 27:27-31.)
2. “They” were the Jewish people who stood looking at Him dying, without any degree of spiritual perception or understanding of this watershed event, Lk. 23:35.
3. “They” were the religious leaders of Israel who sneered, “He saved others; let him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God,” Lk. 23:35.
4. “They” included the unrepentant thief on the cross, who also blasphemed Him saying, “If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us,” Lk. 23:39.

III. Revelation: on the forgiving prayer of Christ

1. Did Jesus always pray within the will of God the Father, including on this occasion? (Jn. 8:29)
2. Did the Father hear and answer Jesus’ petition and blot out these sins committed by the soldiers, the crowd, the religious leaders, and the thief? (Jn. 11:41-42)
3. If so, does this mean that these sinful people received eternal salvation (forgiveness), even though they did not even ask for it? No! *It means that these particular “Good Friday” sins (mocking, spiritual blindness, sneering, and blasphemy) will not be included as charges against them on the day of judgment . . . because Jesus said so.*
4. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, uttered almost the same forgiving words as Christ did, Acts 7:60. *Was Stephen’s prayer answered? I don’t think so . . . only Christ has the power to forgive sins by His spoken word. It is not possible for believers to remove the sins of others, but we can exhibit the forgiving nature of our Lord.*

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Recognize and thank the Lord that my sins are forgiven through His shed blood which purchased my salvation, Acts 20:28; Titus 3:5.
2. Forgive others, no matter how great their sins may be against me . . . because God has forgiven all of my sins, Mt. 6:12, 14-15.
3. Avoid the pernicious sins of attitude that cause me to mock, sneer, or blaspheme the things of God . . . which I cannot see or understand because of my spiritual blindness, I Cor. 2:14.
4. Be willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ . . . even unto death, Jn. 15:13; I Jn. 3:16

#2: A Word of Promise of Paradise

I. Concentration: on Luke 23:43

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

II. Meditation: on the man to whom Jesus spoke these words

1. He was a condemned criminal, a robber, Lk. 23:32; Mt. 27:38.
2. He was a person who feared and revered God, as seen in his rebuke of the unrepentant criminal, Lk. 23:40.
3. He confessed his sin and guilt: “We indeed justly . . . receive the due reward of our deeds,” Lk. 23:41.
4. He recognized Jesus’ sinless, divine, royal nature, and with faith he asked to be remembered (with mercy and grace): “This man has done nothing wrong . . . Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,” Lk. 23:41-42.

III. Revelation: on God’s eternal plan of salvation

1. Realize that as an unbeliever, I am a sinner already condemned before God, and under the sentence of death, Jn. 3:18.
2. Be convicted by the Holy Spirit of my personal guilt before God, Jn. 6:44.
3. Repent, confess, and ask God for forgiveness, I Jn. 1:9.
4. In faith, receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, Rom. 10:9-10, 13.

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Understand that a person can be saved only “by grace through faith,” (Eph. 2:8) . . . not by good works or by a ritual (like baptism).
2. Know that God loves each individual, regardless of their gross sins, and that He invites each person to receive forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life through His Son, Jesus.
3. Listen for and hear Jesus speaking personal words of assurance during the most difficult times of my life, Mt. 11:28-30.
4. Rely upon the promises of the Lord when the day of my death comes, II Tim. 4:6-8. *Jesus’ words to the repentant robber must have been a great comfort to him between the time of the Lord’s death and the moment the thief breathed his last, after his legs were broken by a Roman soldier.*

#3: A Word of Concern for Family

I. Concentration: on John 19:26-27

“Woman, behold your son . . . Behold your mother.”

II. Meditation: on the circumstances behind this word of Jesus

1. Jesus was obeying the Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12) by honoring and caring for His mother, Mary.
2. Apparently, Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, already had died by this time; otherwise, he would have continued with the responsibility of caring for his wife, Mary.
3. As the oldest son of the family, Jesus had the duty of caring for His mother, four brothers, and at least two sisters, Mt. 13:55-56 . . . yet He did not pass along this responsibility to his oldest half-brother (James), perhaps, because, at this time, His brothers did not believe in Him, Jn. 7:5.
4. Jesus assigned to the disciple John the responsibility of caring for His mother because John was there (at the cross), and because John was His true spiritual brother, Lk. 8:21; Mk. 10:29-30.

III. Revelation: on the implications of this event

1. Throughout His entire life, Jesus obeyed the law, Mt. 5:17.
2. Although Jesus was aware early in His life that He was to do His heavenly Father’s work (Lk. 2:49), yet He followed Joseph’s trade until age 30 (Lk. 3:23), and was known as “the carpenter’s son,” Mk. 6:3.
3. Family members often are the most skeptical of a person’s spiritual walk with God . . . perhaps because, as the old saying goes: “Familiarity breeds contempt,” Mt. 13:58.
4. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved and who wrote the Gospel containing this text, had spiritual perception into the ways of God, and thus was a trustworthy person to carry on Jesus’ responsibilities . . . with His mother, as well as by being an Apostle in the early church.

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Obey the Ten Commandments given by Almighty God.
2. Honor, respect, and care for my parents (and other elderly persons).
3. Recognize that above my job or vocation, there is a higher calling to serve my Father in heaven.
4. Follow Jesus wherever He goes, hearing and obeying His voice to me.

#4: A Word of Questioning of Purpose

I. Concentration: on Matthew 27:46

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

II. Meditation: on the circumstances surrounding this question

1. Total darkness encompassed the land for three hours: from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon on “Good Friday,” Mt. 27:45.
2. This darkness symbolized the Father’s removal of His glory from the Son . . . Who had “become sin” for us, II Cor. 5:21.
3. Bearing all the sins of the world was the dreaded “cup” which Jesus was given to drink, Mt. 26:39, 42, 44.
4. Most of the people gathered around the cross had no spiritual discernment or perception . . . thinking that Jesus would call out to a mere man (Elijah), rather than calling out to the Father, using His Hebrew name, “El,” which expresses God’s majesty and power.

III. Revelation: on the spiritual implications in the “fourth word” of Jesus

1. The world without God’s presence is in thick darkness; yet through Christ’s atoning death, a way was opened into the light of God’s holy presence . . . the darkened sun event was connected with the veil of the temple being torn from top to bottom, Mt. 27:51; Lk. 23:45.
2. The Father turned His back on His Son, Who had become sin, because God in His holiness cannot stand to look upon man’s sin and rebellion, II Cor. 6:14; I Tim. 6:16; I Pet. 2:9; I Jn. 1:5.
3. Jesus knew why He had been sent to earth: to die, but momentarily in His human despair and loneliness for the Father’s presence, He asked the poignant question, “Why?”
4. The question “Why?” often goes unanswered today, because it only can be answered by God; however, it is not a sin to ask Him “Why?”

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Rejoice that the darkest hour in the history of the world was the occasion when God opened to believers the glorious light of His salvation.
2. Receive Jesus’ righteousness and holiness (light) in exchange for my sins (darkness) which He has taken away, II Cor. 5:21.
3. Know that God has a redemptive purpose for my life . . . that He has chosen and determined a divine destiny for me to fulfill.
4. Feel free to cry out to the Father for spiritual enlightenment during the “dark days of my soul.”

#5: A Word of Intense Human Suffering

I. Concentration: on John 19:28

"I thirst!"

II. Meditation: on Christ's physical, human suffering in His flesh

1. Many Old Testament passages prophesied that the Messiah would suffer physically, Isa. 53:1-12.
2. The Gospel writers connected the sufferings of Jesus (scourging, crown of thorns, nails, thirst, etc.) with the many Old Testament prophesies: Mt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; Lk. 9:22; 17:25.
3. Jesus Himself taught the divine necessity of His suffering as the Messiah, Lk. 22:15; 24:26.
4. Both Peter and Paul spoke of the human suffering which was endured by God's Messiah, Acts 3:18; 26:23.

III. Revelation: on the spiritual benefits of Christ's suffering

1. Through His suffering, Jesus learned by experience the full meaning of what total obedience to the Father's will involved, Heb. 5:8.
2. Because Jesus experienced intense human suffering, He is able to aid believers who are going through the same kind of testing, Heb. 2:18.
3. Jesus set for His followers the example of suffering with the right attitude . . . neither reviling nor threatening revenge, I Pet. 2:21-23.
4. Jesus' suffering was a vital part of the Father's plan of salvation: "Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," I Pet. 3:18.

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Grasp the stark reality that Jesus suffered excruciating pain and agony in my place . . . for my sins!
2. Regularly remember Christ's broken body, not only when I observe the Lord's Supper, but also whenever I need physical and spiritual healing, Mt. 8:16-17.
3. Expect as a follower of Jesus, that I also will experience suffering and persecution, Mt. 10:24-25; II Tim. 3:12.
4. Endure joyfully the suffering that comes my way because of my Christian witness, realizing that I am privileged to participate in Christ's sufferings and to be used by the Father in His great redemptive purpose, Col. 1:24; I Pet. 4:16.

#6: A Word of Fulfillment of Destiny

I. Concentration: on John 19:30

"It is finished!"

II. Meditation: on Jesus' use of the word "finished" in John's gospel

1. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work," Jn. 4:34.
2. "The works which the Father has given Me to finish . . . bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me," Jn. 5:36.
3. "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do," Jn. 17:4.
4. "It is finished!" Jn. 19:30. *Traditionally, "It is finished!" were the words spoken by the Jewish High Priest when he had completed all the sacrifices required on the Day of Atonement, Lev. 16.*

III. Revelation: on what was "finished" on the cross

1. Sacrifice had been offered: "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God," Heb. 10:12.
2. Suffering had been endured: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," I Pet. 3:18.
3. Scripture had been fulfilled: "Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled . . .," Jn. 19:28.
4. Salvation had been purchased: ". . . the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28.

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Personalize in my spirit the sacrifice Christ offered as He died on the cross for me; resolve also to live a sacrificial life for Him, Rom. 12:1-2.
2. Visualize in my mind all the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual suffering which Jesus endured for me; willingly endure suffering and persecution in His name, II Tim. 3:12.
3. Search the Old Testament for Messianic prophecies, which were clearly fulfilled in Jesus Christ; pattern my thoughts, words, and actions to fulfill God's destiny for my life, by following His word to me.
4. Praise and thank the Lord God by worshiping the Lamb Who was slain, Rev. 13:8; testify to the lost world of the Father's plan of salvation.

#7: A Word of Victorious Assurance

I. Concentration: on Luke 23:46

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”

II. Meditation: on the implications of Christ’s final words

1. “Father” - Although Jesus was God, an equal partner with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, in His human form He acknowledged the Father as His God, Mk. 15:34; Jn. 20:17.
2. “Hands” - This refers to the power, might, and authority to act which only Almighty God possesses, Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 12:2; I Pet. 3:22.
3. “Commit” - This “surrender” or submission was a deliberate act of Jesus’ will . . . a choice; His purposeful decision was to voluntarily die for us, Jn. 10:11, 18.
4. “Spirit” - This word (without a capital “S”) does not refer here to the Holy Spirit; rather “spirit” refers to the immortal part of man made in the spiritual image of God, Gen. 1:27 . . . not the “soul” (mind, emotions, and will), but the “spirit” (perceptive spiritual intuition, a quickened conscience, and the ability to commune and fellowship with Almighty God), Heb. 4:12; I Thes. 5:23; Jn. 4:23-24; Rom. 8:16.

III. Revelation: on the victorious assurance of the Lord Jesus

1. Jesus knew who He was . . . the beloved Son, Mt. 3:17; 17:5.
2. Jesus knew to Whom He was going . . . to the Father, Jn. 16:19.
3. Jesus was in complete control of the entire crucifixion event . . . even to the point of deliberately willing the departure of His spirit into God’s care, Jn. 10:18; 19:11.
4. The final words from the cross by the “Son of David” quoted a Psalm of David . . . Psa. 31:5. (See also Acts 7:59.)

IV. Applications: as a Christian, I need to . . .

1. Know for certain that I am a child of God, Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:26.
2. Know for certain that I am going to heaven when I die, II Cor. 5:8.
3. Know for certain that the Lord is in complete control of the universe . . . and of my life, Rom. 8:28-29; Mt. 28:18.
4. Know for certain that God’s word reveals truth and light for every circumstance and situation I may face in my life . . . including my death, Psa. 119:11, 105.

Our Last Words on Earth

When the hour comes for us to leave this world for the next, if circumstances allow, it is totally appropriate for us to speak these same last thoughts which came from the lips of Jesus. With our family and friends gathered around our deathbed, could we say the following?

1. I bear no grudge, no ill will, no enmity toward anyone.
2. I will meet you in heaven soon.
3. I want you to take care of each other.
4. I don't understand all the "why's" . . . but God does.
5. I am continuing to suffer physically. *(No false or pious denial of reality!)*
6. I am glad my life has accomplished some good in the purposes of God.
7. I am trusting You, Lord, to receive me into Your glorious presence.

But what if our departure is a sudden, unexpected event . . . an automobile accident . . . a heart attack? What if we have no time to gather loved ones around us for a dying declaration?

The answer is simple. We need to live out these seven truths every day so that whether or not we have the chance to speak them with our lips, those whom we leave behind will know in their hearts that these are our "famous last words."

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