

## Perhaps the last column...

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This could be the last “Faith perspectives” column from me. I have thanked many of you in person when you’ve told me you’ve appreciated something I’ve written, but I haven’t said thank you in print. If this is my last column, I sure want to say thanks to everyone who has taken the time to read and think about what I’ve written, and to thank you for your very kind words. Thank you, too, to the Advocate for giving me the opportunity to write 23 columns over the past two years; you have been great to work with! (And you haven’t minded when I end a sentence with a preposition, like I just did there.)

But this could be the last column. I try not to take for granted the grace I’ve been given, whether it’s from you readers or from the editors or, especially, from God. I could be dead before my next deadline on December 15 – that is a true statement confirmed by things like Indiana tornadoes and bombs in luxury hotels in Amman and car crashes on a regular Tuesday morning and hearts that give out in 28 year-old pro basketball players and 47 year-old men. Or, while it doesn’t cost this paper much to run our columns (we aren’t paid – or, at least, I’m not!), there could be an executive decision that two years is long enough and the space could be used better for advertising or something different. Something entirely beyond my control could make this the last column. I plan to write some more, and I hope that you’ll read my mid-December column, but I cannot count on it.

It is fine and appropriate to make plans for the future, but when that planning is made apart from the fact that we are not the ones with the final say and that God’s plans and purposes must be given first consideration, our planning can be prideful – and foolish, too. The Bible speaks to this. James 4:13-17 says: *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.* Among the wise words in Proverbs 16, we read these: *The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. And: There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. And: Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

I cannot presume that I will have another column to write. I may not have tomorrow. But I do not live with a morbid sense of dread or paralyzing anxiety or stoic fatalism. Instead, I want to look to a loving and gracious Father in heaven who counts me as one of his children and holds me close and will never let me go, and I want to find my hope and peace and purpose in his perfect plans. Knowing (and being known by) the One who knows it all and is in control can be a tremendously liberating and exhilarating thing. I want to live every day to the fullest and use every day to get to know God better and help

others know him, too. I want to do as Jesus taught in Matthew 6: not to worry about today or tomorrow, but to seek first of all the things that are most important to God, and I want to remind all of us who take God at his word that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39).

Maybe 47 years on earth is all God has in mind for me – but maybe I'm only in the first half of my life. Maybe this is my last column, but maybe, and God willing, it's just a start

Cory Dahl is pastor of First Baptist Church of Sturgeon Bay. His e-mail is [cdahl@sturgeon-bay.com](mailto:cdahl@sturgeon-bay.com)

Bible verses are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).