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Tuesdays with Morrie: an old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson

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the book on the outcomes of moral decisions. Despite these limitations, I found the book excellent and a must read for pastors. I mark it 8.5 out of 10.

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Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson

Mitch Albom

New York: Doubleday, 1997.

192 pages, \$31.95 Hardcover

Tuesdays with Morrie is the account of the last class taught by professor Morrie Schwartz and taken by one student, Mitch Albom. Reunited after sixteen years, the student and professor resume their Tuesday discussion sessions, with one difference: Morrie is dying from the debilitating disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Morrie does not indulge in self-pity, nor does he invite sympathy from others. Rather, he counts himself lucky to be surrounded by loving family and friends, and to have been afforded the opportunity to live the dying process in such a way that he can share the insights learned from it with others. Death becomes Morrie's last project.

Albom describes Morrie as "standing on the tracks, listening to death's locomotive whistle", all the while being "very clear about the important things in life". Albom wants to know how this is possible, and if he, too, can possess such certainty. Morrie is glad to help.

Morrie invites Mitch to make a list of the issues which are important to him. Albom's list, which becomes the class syllabus, is universal: death, fear, aging, greed, marriage, family, society, forgiveness, a meaningful life. Mitch's narration of the classes is so personal that we are thrust right into the study with Morrie, discussing life's deeper issues, all the while helping Morrie in his painful yet inexorable death.

This is not a self-help book, nor a feel good book. Watching Morrie die is devastating and at times embarrassing. When asked what he dreaded most about his relentless disease, Morrie answered bluntly, "Losing the ability to wipe my ass." Who will not agree? We see this happen to Morrie, yet even this humiliation fails to get him down. "It's like going back to being a child again," Morrie philosophizes. "Someone to lift you. Someone to wipe you. We all know how to be a child. It's inside all of us. For me, it's just remembering how to enjoy it."

Observing Morrie's upbeat manner in the face of death, listening to the wisdom he generously shares, makes this a most engaging book. *Tuesdays with Morrie* was lent to me by a parishioner, himself confined to a wheelchair and without the ability to swallow or talk. As I began to read it I thought, "I can understand why this book appeals to him." By the third chapter I had forgotten my parishioner and was reading for myself. I read it in one sitting. Then I re-read it the next day.

Nor is this a "Christian" book. Morrie was a Jew who embraced atheism at an early age. Yet it is deeply spiritual, right at home with the teachings of the church. For example, Morrie has learned that material things don't satisfy. Rather, satisfaction comes from "offering others what you have to give". Morrie illustrates this with what might pass as a modern paraphrase of Jesus' cup of cold water: playing cards with a lonely old man. It's that simple.

This is an ideal book for those working with the terminally ill or permanently shut-in, for those wrestling with their own mortality, or simply for those of us who are searching for a refreshing alternative to our bankrupt modern culture's offerings. The layout of the book with its teacher-student paradigm, makes it an ideal study book for a college and careers group.

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Preaching The Presence of God: A Homiletic From An Asian American Perspective

Eunjoo Mary Kim

Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999

\$24.95 Softcover

As an ethnic minister (Korean) who works in an English speaking congregation (White), I always wonder about whether or not there is a necessity for a specific sermon style for a particular context. The book, *Preaching the Presence of God*, focusses on the Asian American context, was enough to interest me. Historical and cultural background play an important role in making modern identity, especially in an Asian-American (Chinese, Korean and Japanese) context. The traditional religions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and their own indigenous religions such as Shamanism, Shintoism, etc., could be their religious background. However, how much and still they have influenced Asian American life, especially in their Christian belief, is a controversial issue. Before reading the book, I wanted to get information about the real context of Asian Americans with a specific report, such as a result of a survey or a demographic