

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a man with curly hair, seen from behind, sitting on a mossy rock. He is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. A black and white dog is lying down next to him, looking towards the right. They are overlooking a large body of water with several islands, and in the distance, there are mountains under a sunset sky with orange and yellow clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, reflecting on the water.

THE ART OF
BECOMING
YOU

*The Beautiful Journey of Discovering
Who You Have Always Been*

ROSS HARVEY

Dedication

To Christy Anne,

Who has helped me discover that the greatest treasures in life are not necessarily the things we spend our lives searching for.

Sometimes, they are the people who come into our lives when we least expect them, love us for who we are, and remind us of everything that truly matters.

And to every person who has ever wondered whether there might be something more to life.

There is.

And perhaps it has been within you all along.

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You Were Here All Along

Introduction

The Most Wonderful Discovery of All

I have a question for you.

Who are you?

Not your name. Not your age. Not what you do for a living, where you went to school, how much money you have, or what you have accomplished.

Who are you, really?

It's an interesting question, isn't it?

Most of us can tell someone what we do. We can describe our families, our interests, our work, our successes, and perhaps even our disappointments.

But when someone asks us who we really are, the answer isn't always quite so easy.

And perhaps that's because we've spent so much of our lives becoming the people we thought we were supposed to be that we haven't always taken the time to discover who we actually are.

I know something about that.

I've lived a rather interesting life.

I've been a world champion racquetball player, a golf and racquet sports professional, a businessman, a restaurant owner, an author, and a dreamer of some rather extraordinary dreams.

I've experienced success. I've experienced failure. I've made wonderful decisions and some that, looking back, might have benefited from a little more thought.

I've known moments of tremendous excitement and moments of profound uncertainty.

And through it all, I've continued to ask questions.

What is life really about?

Why are we here?

What makes us happy?

What does it mean to be successful?

And perhaps most importantly, how do we become the people we were meant to be?

Now, at 66 years of age, I find myself looking at life with a perspective that is quite different from the one I had when I was 26, or 36, or even 56.

Not because I have all the answers.

I most certainly don't.

But because I've begun to appreciate something that I believe is extraordinarily important.

The purpose of life may not be to become somebody extraordinary. It may be to discover how extraordinary it is simply to be ourselves.

And that is what this book is about.

A Life That Keeps Surprising Me

These days, some of the happiest moments of my life are also among the simplest.

I love waking up in the morning and spending time with my wife, Christy Anne.

I love preparing her breakfast, sharing a kiss, and finding little ways to make her day more comfortable and enjoyable.

I love walking through our neighbourhood in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal, greeting people I've come to know, and occasionally making a new friend.

Sometimes I sit in the lobby of our building with a mug of tea, simply enjoying the opportunity to say good morning to people as they begin their day.

Nothing particularly extraordinary about that, you might think.

And perhaps you'd be right.

But I find it wonderful.

I have also become involved in helping a local Indian restaurant, Express Indien, grow into something more than a place where people come to eat.

I envision it becoming a gathering place — somewhere people can enjoy wonderful food, make friends, share ideas, listen to music, and feel that they belong.

Not because I need another business accomplishment.

But because I genuinely enjoy bringing people together.

And somewhere in all these seemingly ordinary experiences, I've come to recognize something about myself.

I love people.

I love making people smile.

I love seeing possibilities where others may see only what already exists.

I love imagining a world in which people care for one another, where nobody feels forgotten, and where every person has an opportunity to experience a meaningful and joyful life.

These are not new qualities I've suddenly acquired.

Looking back, I can see that many of them have been present throughout my life.

But perhaps I understand them better now.

Perhaps I am becoming more comfortable simply being me.

And perhaps that is what self-discovery is really all about.

This Is Not a Book About Becoming Perfect

Let me make something clear right from the beginning.

I am not writing this book because I believe I have mastered the art of living.

Far from it.

I am still learning.

I still have moments when I become impatient, when things don't work out the way I hoped, or when I wonder whether I'm spending my time as wisely as I could.

I still have enormous dreams.

I still imagine extraordinary possibilities.

And I still occasionally have to remind myself of one of the simplest and most important lessons I've learned:

Let go and let God.

What has changed is not that life has become perfect.

It's that I am learning to appreciate life without requiring it to be perfect.

I am learning that I don't have to accomplish something remarkable every day for the day itself to be remarkable.

I am learning that sometimes the most important thing I can do is simply be there for someone.

And I am learning that the more comfortable I become with who I am, the less concerned I become about who others might think I should be.

That, to me, is freedom.

An Invitation

As we journey through this book together, I want to invite you to do something.

Be curious about yourself.

Not critical.

Not judgmental.

Simply curious.

Think about the person you were as a child, before the world began telling you what was expected of you.

Think about the things that bring you genuine happiness.

Think about the moments when you feel most alive, most peaceful, most loving, and most completely yourself.

Think about the dreams you've carried, the disappointments you've experienced, the people you've loved, and the lessons you've learned.

And perhaps, most importantly, give yourself permission to question some of the things you've always believed about who you are.

You may discover that certain qualities you've spent years trying to develop have been within you all along.

You may discover that some of the things you've been pursuing aren't nearly as important as you once believed.

You may even discover that the life you've been searching for is much closer than you imagined.

I cannot promise that every question will have an easy answer.

But I can promise that the questions themselves are worth asking.

Because there is something rather wonderful about getting to know yourself.

And there is something even more wonderful about discovering that you actually like the person you find.

So, shall we begin?

Chapter One

Who Am I, Really?

There was a time in my life when, if you had asked me who I was, I might have answered by telling you what I had accomplished.

I was a world champion racquetball player.

That was certainly something I was proud of.

Winning a world championship requires dedication, discipline, determination, and an enormous amount of work.

It also brings recognition.

People know your name. They admire what you've accomplished. They associate you with success.

And when you've worked so hard to achieve something, it's natural to allow that achievement to become part of how you see yourself.

But here's an interesting question.

If I had never won that championship, would I have been a different person?

Certainly, my experiences would have been different.

Perhaps my career would have taken another direction.

Perhaps certain opportunities would never have presented themselves.

But would the person underneath all those experiences have been fundamentally different?

Would I have been less valuable?

Less worthy of love?

Less deserving of happiness?

Of course not.

And yet, how often do we measure ourselves by precisely those kinds of things?

Our accomplishments.

Our possessions.

Our careers.

Our appearance.

Our social standing.

The approval of other people.

We spend so much time building an identity around what we do that we sometimes lose sight of who is doing it.

The Labels We Wear

From a very early age, people begin giving us labels.

We're told we're smart, athletic, shy, outgoing, talented, difficult, responsible, or perhaps not particularly good at something.

Some of these descriptions may be accurate.

Others may be little more than someone else's interpretation of a particular moment.

But labels have a way of sticking.

A child who is told repeatedly that he isn't good at school may grow into an adult who believes he isn't particularly intelligent.

Someone who experiences failure in a relationship may begin to believe that he or she is somehow unlovable.

A person who has spent decades in a particular profession may struggle to imagine who they are without that job.

And the more we identify with these labels, the more difficult it can become to see ourselves beyond them.

But here's what I believe.

You are not a label. You are a living, growing, wonderfully complex human being.

You are not simply the sum of your accomplishments or your disappointments.

You are not defined by the worst decision you've ever made.

Nor are you defined by the greatest success you've ever enjoyed.

You are something much more interesting than that.

And discovering what that something is may be one of life's most rewarding adventures.

A Question Worth Living With

I'd like you to try something.

Imagine meeting someone who knows absolutely nothing about you.

They don't know your name, your occupation, your financial circumstances, or anything about your past.

And imagine that this person isn't interested in any of those things.

Instead, they ask:

"What brings you joy?"

"What do you care about most?"

"What makes you feel alive?"

"What kind of person do you want to be?"

Now we're getting somewhere.

Because these questions begin to take us beyond the surface of our lives.

They invite us to explore the values, desires, interests, and qualities that make us who we are.

And perhaps the most beautiful part of this exploration is that there are no right or wrong answers.

Your answers don't have to impress anybody.

They simply have to be yours.

A Little Time for Yourself

Before moving on, I'd like to invite you to spend a few quiet moments with three questions.

1. **When do I feel most completely myself?** Think of moments when you are relaxed, comfortable, and not trying to impress or satisfy anyone.
2. **What matters to me even when nobody else notices?** Consider the values and activities that bring you satisfaction without recognition or reward.
3. **If I had nothing to prove to anyone, how would I choose to live?** Allow yourself to imagine a life shaped by your own deepest priorities.

You don't need to answer them immediately.

In fact, you may find that your answers change as you continue reading.

That's perfectly fine.

Self-discovery isn't an examination you have to pass.

It's a relationship you develop with yourself.

And like every meaningful relationship, it becomes richer through time, attention, honesty, and love.

The wonderful thing about discovering who you are is that you don't have to become somebody else to begin.

You simply have to become willing to meet yourself.

And that, my friend, is where our journey begins.

Chapter Two

The Person I Thought I Was

Have you ever wondered how many different people you've been during your lifetime?

I certainly have.

I've been a world champion racquetball player, a golf professional, a businessman, a restaurant owner, an entrepreneur, and an author.

I've enjoyed tremendous successes, experienced disappointments, pursued extraordinary dreams, and occasionally wondered what on earth I was going to do next.

And through it all, I've continued discovering who I am.

But here's something interesting.

For much of my life, I tended to define myself by what I was doing.

When I was competing professionally, I was an athlete.

When I owned businesses, I was an entrepreneur.

When I began writing books, I became an author.

All perfectly reasonable descriptions.

But none of them really answered the question of who I was.

They described my activities, not necessarily my identity.

And there's a rather important difference.

The World Champion

In 1984, I won the World Racquetball Championship in Sacramento, California.

It was a wonderful accomplishment, representing years of dedication, determination, and hard work.

But suppose I had lost the final match.

Would I have been a different person?

Would I have been less deserving of happiness, friendship, or love?

Of course not.

The result would have changed.

My value as a human being would not.

Yet how often do we allow our accomplishments to determine how we feel about ourselves?

We succeed and feel important.

We fail and feel inadequate.

We receive recognition and feel worthwhile.

We're overlooked and begin questioning our value.

Somewhere along the way, we can begin confusing what we accomplish with who we are.

I believe that's a mistake.

Our accomplishments reveal what we can do. They don't determine what we're worth.

The Man on the Bench

These days, one of my favourite places is a bench near the Metro grocery store on Somerled Avenue in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal.

I call it my office.

It's not particularly impressive.

No desk. No telephone. No receptionist.

And during a Montreal winter, the heating system leaves something to be desired!

But I love it.

I sit with my morning tea, greeting neighbours as they begin their day.

Some are heading to work.

Others are walking their dogs.

Parents are accompanying their children to school.

And I get to say good morning.

Sometimes someone stops to chat.

Sometimes we share a laugh.

And sometimes a simple smile is the entire conversation.

I find it enormously satisfying.

Now, consider something.

More than forty years ago, I stood on a racquetball court competing for a world championship.

Today, I sit on a bench greeting people.

One experience brought applause.

The other brings smiles.

And both have brought me genuine happiness.

Perhaps they aren't as different as they appear.

In both situations, I was doing something I enjoyed.

In both, I was connecting with people.

And in both, I was expressing something about myself.

The circumstances changed.

But perhaps the person underneath them hasn't changed nearly as much as I once imagined.

The Beautiful Surprise of Love

Another wonderful discovery came when I met Christy Anne.

For much of my life, I was single.

Then, in my sixties, I met a woman at a local food bank who would become my wife.

Not exactly the setting someone might imagine for the beginning of a great romance!

But life has a delightful way of surprising us.

Today, some of my happiest moments involve doing little things for Christy.

Making her tea.

Preparing her breakfast.

Driving her to appointments.

Helping her get comfortable.

Or simply enjoying a cuddle together.

Nothing particularly extraordinary.

And yet, to me, these moments are priceless.

I've discovered how much I enjoy caring for someone.

How much pleasure I find in making another person happy.

And how little I actually need to experience genuine contentment.

Perhaps those qualities were always within me.

Perhaps I simply needed the right circumstances to recognize them.

You Are Allowed to Change

One of the most liberating things I've learned is that we don't have to remain exactly as we were.

We're allowed to develop new interests.

We're allowed to change our priorities.

We're allowed to discover that something we once considered enormously important no longer matters quite as much.

And we're allowed to find happiness in places we never expected.

That doesn't mean our earlier lives were mistakes.

Every experience contributes something.

The successes.

The disappointments.

The relationships.

The adventures.

All of them become part of our story.

But none of them requires us to remain trapped in an earlier version of ourselves.

At 66, I still have enormous dreams.

I want to write books, help transform my neighbourhood, and contribute to creating a better world.

But I no longer want my happiness to depend on whether every dream becomes reality.

I want to enjoy the dreaming.

I want to enjoy the doing.

And I want to enjoy the people I meet along the way.

Perhaps that's what becoming ourselves is really about.

Not abandoning who we've been.

But discovering what matters most about who we are.

A Little Time for Yourself

I'd like you to consider three questions.

- 1. How have you defined yourself throughout your life?** Have your occupations, accomplishments, or relationships become central to your identity?
- 2. What qualities have remained constant?** Think about the things you've always enjoyed and the values that have stayed with you.
- 3. Who are you when nobody is watching?** What brings you genuine happiness when there's nothing to prove?

You may discover that the person you thought you were was never the whole story.

And that's wonderful.

Because there's still so much more to discover.

A Thought to Carry With You

You are not defined by what you've accomplished, what you've lost, or what others think of you. You are free to appreciate who you've been while discovering who you truly are.

Chapter Three

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Have you ever noticed how much time you spend talking to yourself?

I don't necessarily mean out loud.

Although I confess that I occasionally have some rather interesting conversations with myself!

I'm talking about the little voice that accompanies us throughout the day.

The voice that comments on our decisions, reminds us of our mistakes, and occasionally worries about things that haven't even happened.

Sometimes it's encouraging.

"You can do this."

"Give it a try."

"Everything will work out."

But sometimes it's remarkably unkind.

"You're not good enough."

"You always make mistakes."

"You're too old."

"It's too late."

And perhaps the most discouraging statement of all:

"That's just the way I am."

I find that last statement particularly interesting.

Because it suggests that who we are is somehow fixed.

That our past has permanently determined our future.

And that change is no longer possible.

I don't believe that.

Not for a moment.

Where Our Stories Begin

From childhood, we begin developing beliefs about ourselves.

A teacher tells us we're talented, and we begin believing we have special abilities.

Someone criticizes us, and we may begin questioning our worth.

A parent praises our accomplishments, and we learn to associate success with approval.

A friend laughs at one of our dreams, and perhaps we become reluctant to share our ideas.

Over time, these experiences help shape the stories we tell ourselves.

Some are encouraging.

Others are limiting.

And some may not be particularly accurate at all.

Yet we often treat them as unquestionable truths.

Consider someone who struggled with mathematics at school.

Years later, that person may still say, "I'm terrible with numbers."

But is that necessarily true?

Perhaps they simply needed a different teacher.

Perhaps they were distracted.

Perhaps they never had an opportunity to develop their abilities.

A childhood difficulty has become an adult identity.

And the person may never think to question it.

Just because we've believed something for a long time doesn't mean it's true.

The Story of Success

For much of my life, I enjoyed pursuing ambitious goals.

I loved competition.

I loved business.

I loved imagining possibilities and trying to make them real.

And I still do.

But I've come to recognize a subtle difference between two beliefs.

"I enjoy accomplishing extraordinary things."

And:

"I must accomplish extraordinary things to be worthwhile."

The first is exciting.

The second can become exhausting.

Because when our happiness depends on achieving the next goal, there's always another goal waiting.

Another project.

Another challenge.

Another accomplishment.

And we can spend our entire lives pursuing a feeling of satisfaction that never quite arrives.

These days, I'm learning to enjoy the process without requiring a particular outcome.

I can write a book because I enjoy writing.

I can help a neighbour because I enjoy helping.

I can pursue an ambitious community project because I believe it's worthwhile.

And I can appreciate the experience even if everything doesn't unfold exactly as I imagined.

That's a much more peaceful way to live.

A Different Story

Recently, I've become involved with Express Indien, a local Indian restaurant in my neighbourhood.

My dream is to help transform it into a welcoming gathering place where people enjoy good food, music, friendship, and community.

I call the initiative *The Gathering*.

It's an exciting idea.

And I can imagine all sorts of wonderful possibilities.

But here's something I've learned.

The success of the project doesn't have to depend entirely on how many people come through the door.

Suppose I invite a few neighbours for lunch.

They enjoy themselves.

They meet someone new.

They share a laugh.

Perhaps a friendship begins.

Has something meaningful happened?

Absolutely.

Even if the restaurant doesn't become the enormous community gathering place I envision, those moments will still have mattered.

That's a different story from the one that says everything must become big to be worthwhile.

It's a story in which small acts of kindness have value of their own.

And it's one I increasingly enjoy living.

Changing the Conversation

So how do we change the stories we tell ourselves?

I believe the first step is simply to notice them.

When you make a mistake, what do you say to yourself?

When something doesn't work out, how do you interpret it?

When you imagine trying something new, what thoughts appear?

Perhaps you hear yourself saying:

"I can't do that."

"I'm not creative."

"I'm too old."

"I never finish anything."

When those thoughts arise, try asking yourself a simple question.

Is that really true?

Or is it simply something I've come to believe?

Instead of saying, "I can't do this," perhaps you could say, "I haven't learned how to do this yet."

Instead of, "I'm a failure," perhaps, "Something I tried didn't work."

Instead of, "It's too late," perhaps, "I wonder what might still be possible."

These aren't magical phrases.

They don't eliminate difficulties.

But they create room for possibility.

And sometimes, possibility is exactly what we need.

The Author of Your Life

There's something wonderful about being a writer.

You begin with a blank page.

You have an idea of where the story might go.

But as you write, unexpected possibilities appear.

Characters develop.

Circumstances change.

And sometimes the story becomes something quite different from what you originally imagined.

Life is much the same.

We cannot rewrite everything that has happened.

We cannot erase every disappointment.

But we can reconsider what those experiences mean.

We can learn from them.

We can forgive ourselves.

And we can make new choices.

You are allowed to tell a new story about yourself without pretending the old one never happened.

You can acknowledge your past without being imprisoned by it.

And you can begin again, as often as necessary.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these three questions.

1. **What is one limiting belief you've carried about yourself?** Perhaps it concerns your abilities, relationships, age, or opportunities.
2. **Where did that belief come from?** Was it based on experience, something someone said, or an assumption you've never questioned?
3. **What might become possible if you stopped believing it?** Imagine approaching life with a little more curiosity and confidence.

You may discover that some of the limitations you've accepted aren't limitations at all.

They're simply stories.

And stories can change.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your past may have influenced the person you've become, but it doesn't have to determine the person you can still be.

Chapter Four

When Life Doesn't Go According to Plan

I wonder how many people are living exactly the lives they imagined when they were young.

Very few, I suspect.

Most of us begin with some idea of how life is supposed to unfold.

We imagine our careers, relationships, families, homes, and accomplishments.

We picture a future in which everything eventually comes together.

Then life happens.

A business struggles.

A relationship ends.

Someone we love becomes ill.

An opportunity disappears.

Or something completely unexpected changes everything.

And suddenly, the life we planned no longer resembles the life we're living.

What then?

Do we spend years wishing things had been different?

Or might there be something valuable to discover in the unexpected?

The Illusion of Control

I've spent much of my life making plans.

Business plans.

Marketing plans.

Plans for books.

Plans for websites.

And some rather ambitious plans for helping create a better world.

I enjoy planning.

I enjoy imagining possibilities.

And I particularly enjoy the excitement of beginning something new.

But I've learned that there's an enormous difference between making plans and controlling outcomes.

Other people have their own priorities.

Circumstances change.

Unexpected challenges appear.

And sometimes things simply don't work out.

That can be frustrating.

Especially when we believe strongly in what we're trying to accomplish.

But here's something I've come to appreciate.

I can control my effort.

I can control my attitude.

I can choose how I treat people.

But I cannot control everything that happens.

And the sooner I accept that distinction, the more peaceful life becomes.

The Unexpected Gift of Love

Let me tell you about something I certainly didn't anticipate when I was younger.

Getting married in my sixties.

For much of my life, I was single.

Then I met Christy Anne at a local food bank.

We fell in love.

And on February 14, 2025, we were married at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

Valentine's Day.

During a Montreal snowstorm.

It was wonderful.

And entirely different from anything I might have imagined years earlier.

Today, some of my happiest moments involve sharing ordinary experiences with Christy.

Preparing breakfast.

Enjoying a meal.

Watching television.

Helping her get comfortable when she's having a difficult day.

Or simply lying together, enjoying each other's company.

Our life isn't always easy.

Christy lives with chronic pain, and there are challenges that require patience, understanding, and care.

But there is also enormous love.

And happiness.

And laughter.

And the pleasure of knowing that we have one another.

I sometimes wonder what might have happened if I'd decided that certain possibilities were no longer available because of my age.

I might have missed something extraordinary.

An unexpected life is not necessarily a lesser life.

Sometimes it becomes more beautiful than anything we could have planned.

Let Go and Let God

One of the most meaningful lessons I've learned is expressed in five simple words.

Let go and let God.

For me, these words are an expression of faith.

They remind me that I don't have to control every outcome.

I don't have to understand every circumstance.

And I don't have to carry the entire weight of the future on my shoulders.

I can do what I believe is right.

I can act with love.

I can pursue worthwhile opportunities.

And I can trust God while accepting that the results may not always be what I expected.

This doesn't mean sitting back and doing nothing.

Anyone who knows me would find that idea rather amusing!

I still have dreams.

I still take action.

I still want to accomplish things.

But I'm learning to separate my willingness to contribute from my need to control the outcome.

And that has made an enormous difference.

The Life Happening Right Now

Recently, Christy and I enjoyed a simple Thanksgiving dinner together.

She had spent part of the day at the spa.

I prepared the stuffing and got everything ready for her return.

When she arrived home, she was cold and wet.

So I made her a hot chocolate and put dinner on.

A little later, we sat down to our Thanksgiving feast.

Just the two of us.

Nothing extravagant.

But it was wonderful.

And I remember feeling completely content.

I wasn't thinking about the next book I wanted to write.

Or the next project I wanted to develop.

Or the many things I still hope to accomplish.

I was simply enjoying being with the woman I love.

And life was good.

Perhaps that's one of the most important things I've discovered.

We can spend so much time waiting for life to become what we imagined that we overlook the beauty of what it already is.

That doesn't mean giving up on our dreams.

It means remembering to enjoy today while pursuing tomorrow.

The Courage to Begin Again

One of the things I admire most about people is their ability to begin again.

Someone changes careers at fifty.

Someone learns to play the piano at seventy.

Someone finds love after years of loneliness.

Someone recovers from a disappointment and decides to try again.

And someone who has spent years believing life has passed them by suddenly discovers a reason to get excited about tomorrow.

I find these stories inspiring.

Because they remind us that our future doesn't have to resemble our past.

We can learn.

We can change.

We can grow.

And we can discover new possibilities at any age.

Sometimes beginning again requires enormous courage.

Other times, it begins with something as simple as making a telephone call, taking a walk, or saying hello to someone new.

But every new beginning offers the possibility of discovering something about ourselves.

And that makes life a wonderful adventure.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **What part of your life has turned out differently from what you expected?** How has that experience influenced you?
2. **Are you holding on to a plan that no longer serves you?** What might happen if you allowed yourself to consider another possibility?
3. **What unexpected experience has brought something wonderful into your life?** Perhaps something you never could have planned.

You may discover that some of the most meaningful chapters of your life began with events you never anticipated.

And perhaps the next wonderful surprise is still waiting.

A Thought to Carry With You

Life doesn't have to follow your original plan to become a beautiful life. Sometimes the unexpected turns lead us toward the things that matter most.

Chapter Five

The Courage to Look Within

There is someone you've known your entire life.

Someone who has been present through every success, every disappointment, every relationship, and every adventure.

Someone who knows your hopes, your fears, your dreams, and your secrets.

And yet, there's a possibility that you've never really taken the time to get to know that person.

I'm talking about you.

It's rather remarkable when you think about it.

We spend years learning about the world.

We study history, mathematics, science, and countless other subjects.

We learn how to earn a living.

We develop relationships.

We acquire skills.

But how much time do we spend learning about ourselves?

What makes us genuinely happy?

Why do certain things upset us?

What do we value most?

What are we afraid of?

And what kind of life would we choose if we weren't so concerned about what other people might think?

These are important questions.

But they aren't always easy to answer.

The Person in the Mirror

Looking within requires a particular kind of courage.

It's relatively easy to recognize our accomplishments.

We enjoy remembering the things we've done well.

But examining our weaknesses, insecurities, and mistakes can be considerably less comfortable.

We may discover that we've been holding on to beliefs that no longer serve us.

That we've allowed fear to influence important decisions.

Or that we've spent years pursuing things that don't bring us genuine happiness.

I know I've made decisions throughout my life that I would approach differently today.

Some were based on enthusiasm.

Some on assumptions.

And some, perhaps, on not having quite enough information.

But I don't see much value in criticizing myself endlessly for those decisions.

I made them with the understanding I had at the time.

Today, I know more.

And hopefully, tomorrow I'll know a little more still.

That's how learning works.

Self-discovery requires honesty, but it doesn't require self-condemnation.

We can recognize our imperfections without allowing them to define us.

What Makes You Feel Alive?

One of my favourite ways of understanding myself is to notice what brings me genuine joy.

Not what I think should make me happy.

Not what other people consider impressive.

But the experiences that leave me feeling peaceful, energized, grateful, or deeply satisfied.

For me, many of these experiences involve people.

I love greeting my neighbours.

I love bringing people together.

I love imagining ways to improve our community.

And I particularly love making Christy happy.

These experiences tell me something about what matters to me.

They reveal qualities that I want to nurture.

And they help me decide how I would like to spend my time.

Perhaps your answers will be entirely different.

Maybe you feel most alive when you're creating something.

Or spending time in nature.

Or helping children learn.

Or playing music.

Or solving difficult problems.

Or simply enjoying a quiet afternoon with someone you love.

There are no correct answers.

The important thing is that they're yours.

Making Peace with Yourself

I think many people spend an extraordinary amount of time wishing they were different.

Thinner.

Wealthier.

More attractive.

More successful.

More confident.

More outgoing.

Or more like someone they admire.

And while there's nothing wrong with wanting to improve ourselves, there's a danger in believing that happiness must wait until we've become someone else.

What if we began by accepting ourselves as we are?

Not because we're perfect.

But because we're human.

We have strengths.

We have weaknesses.

We have qualities we're proud of and habits we'd like to change.

And we have the capacity to keep learning throughout our lives.

I believe self-acceptance and personal growth can exist beautifully together.

We can appreciate who we are while working toward who we'd like to become.

We can acknowledge our mistakes without losing respect for ourselves.

And we can recognize our limitations without abandoning our dreams.

Perhaps that's the real meaning of becoming comfortable in our own skin.

Not believing we're perfect.

But no longer requiring perfection to feel worthy.

The Wonderful Freedom of Being Yourself

These days, I find myself increasingly comfortable with the person I am.

I enjoy wearing my T-shirts.

I enjoy my morning tea.

I enjoy talking with people.

I enjoy dreaming about extraordinary possibilities.

And I enjoy spending time with Christy.

I don't feel a particular need to impress anyone.

I don't need an elaborate office to feel productive.

I don't need recognition to enjoy helping someone.

And I don't need every project to become an enormous success to appreciate the experience.

Of course, I still have things to learn.

I still make mistakes.

And I still occasionally become impatient when something I'm excited about doesn't move as quickly as I'd like.

But I'm learning to appreciate the person I am without demanding that he become someone entirely different.

And that's a wonderful feeling.

Perhaps the greatest freedom in life is not the freedom to do anything we want.

Perhaps it's the freedom to be ourselves.

To live according to our values.

To enjoy what genuinely brings us happiness.

To love without embarrassment.

To dream without apology.

And to stop measuring our lives against expectations that were never truly our own.

A Little Time for Yourself

Before we move into the next part of our journey, I'd like you to consider three questions.

1. **What brings you genuine happiness?** Think about the experiences that leave you feeling most peaceful, grateful, and alive.

2. **What qualities do you appreciate about yourself?** Not your accomplishments, but the characteristics that make you who you are.
3. **What would you change about your life if you were no longer concerned about impressing anyone?** Perhaps the answer will surprise you.

Self-discovery doesn't require a dramatic transformation.

Sometimes it begins with a few quiet moments of honest reflection.

And sometimes, the most wonderful discovery is realizing that the person you've been searching for has been with you all along.

A Thought to Carry With You

You don't have to become somebody extraordinary to live an extraordinary life. You simply have to discover the beauty of being yourself.

Chapter Six

You Are Not Your Accomplishments

I've accomplished a few interesting things during my lifetime.

I've won a world championship, owned businesses, written books, and pursued some rather ambitious dreams.

And I'm grateful for those experiences.

But here's something I've come to appreciate.

None of those accomplishments makes me more valuable than the person sitting beside me on a park bench.

Nor does someone else's lack of recognition make their life any less meaningful.

We live in a world that places enormous importance on achievement.

We're encouraged to succeed, accumulate, compete, and distinguish ourselves.

And there's nothing wrong with pursuing excellence.

But somewhere along the way, we can begin confusing success with self-worth.

I believe that's a mistake.

The Problem with Keeping Score

In sports, keeping score makes perfect sense.

When I competed professionally in racquetball, I wanted to win.

I trained, practiced, and worked hard to become the best player I could be.

And in 1984, I became a world champion.

It was a wonderful accomplishment.

But life isn't a racquetball match.

There isn't a universal scoreboard determining who has lived the most valuable life.

And yet, we sometimes behave as though there is.

We compare incomes.

Homes.

Careers.

Appearances.

Accomplishments.

Even our children!

And inevitably, someone appears to be doing better.

Someone earns more.

Someone has a larger home.

Someone receives greater recognition.

If our happiness depends on being ahead, we're setting ourselves up for a rather exhausting existence.

Because there's always another comparison waiting.

What Really Matters?

These days, I find myself measuring a good day quite differently.

Did I make Christy smile?

Did I enjoy a pleasant conversation with a neighbour?

Did I help someone?

Did I spend a little time doing something meaningful?

Did I appreciate the life I have?

If the answer to some of those questions is yes, I consider it a good day.

Recently, I've been helping develop The Gathering at Express Indien, a neighbourhood restaurant.

I have all sorts of ideas for making it a wonderful place where people can enjoy good food, friendship, music, and community.

Of course, I'd love to see the restaurant flourish.

But suppose something else happens.

Suppose a lonely person comes in for coffee, meets a neighbour, and begins developing a friendship.

Wouldn't that be a beautiful accomplishment?

It might never appear on a balance sheet.

Nobody might write a newspaper article about it.

But it would matter.

And perhaps that's worth remembering.

Some of the most meaningful things we do will never earn applause.

The Freedom of Being Enough

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning with nothing to prove.

You don't have to impress anyone.

You don't have to achieve something remarkable.

You don't have to demonstrate that you're successful, important, or worthy.

You can simply live.

You can enjoy your breakfast.

Take a walk.

Call a friend.

Help someone.

Work on something that interests you.

And appreciate the experience without worrying about how it compares with anyone else's life.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Now, here's an interesting thought.

What's stopping you?

Certainly, we have responsibilities.

We need to earn a living, care for our families, and fulfill commitments.

But those responsibilities don't require us to measure our personal worth by our accomplishments.

We can work hard without becoming obsessed with success.

We can pursue dreams without allowing them to determine our happiness.

And we can celebrate achievements without believing they make us better than anyone else.

At 66, I still have enormous dreams.

I want to write more books.

I want to help transform my neighbourhood.

I want to contribute to creating a better world.

But I also want to enjoy a cup of tea, a good meal, and a cuddle with Christy.

And I don't believe one set of experiences is necessarily more valuable than the other.

They're all part of living.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider three questions.

1. **How much of your identity is connected to what you've accomplished?** What would remain if those accomplishments were no longer part of how you introduced yourself?
2. **When do you feel most valuable?** Is it when someone recognizes your achievements, or when you're simply doing something meaningful?
3. **What would you enjoy doing if nobody ever knew you'd done it?** The answer may reveal something important about what truly matters to you.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of all is learning to appreciate ourselves without requiring another accomplishment.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your worth was never something you had to earn. Your accomplishments may enrich your life, but they do not determine your value.

Chapter Seven

The Freedom of Having Nothing to Prove

I have a confession to make.

I rather enjoy being right.

I suspect I'm not alone!

There's something satisfying about having an idea, believing in it, and discovering that things unfold exactly as we imagined.

But life has taught me that being right isn't nearly as important as being happy.

And sometimes, insisting on proving ourselves can interfere with both.

We spend an extraordinary amount of energy trying to convince other people of things.

That we're intelligent.

That we're successful.

That our opinions are correct.

That our decisions make sense.

That our dreams are worthwhile.

And perhaps, most importantly, that we're good enough.

But what if we simply stopped trying so hard?

The Approval Trap

From childhood, we learn to appreciate approval.

A parent praises us.

A teacher congratulates us.

A coach recognizes our performance.

And we feel wonderful.

There's nothing wrong with enjoying encouragement.

But problems can arise when approval becomes something we require.

We begin adjusting our behaviour to satisfy other people's expectations.

We say yes when we'd rather say no.

We pursue goals that don't particularly interest us.

We hide parts of our personalities because we're concerned about what others might think.

And occasionally, we abandon dreams simply because someone else doesn't understand them.

I've had plenty of ambitious ideas throughout my life.

Some have been warmly received.

Others have undoubtedly caused people to wonder whether I might be a little unrealistic.

Perhaps occasionally I have been!

But I've come to appreciate that other people don't have to share my enthusiasm for me to enjoy pursuing something I believe is worthwhile.

I can listen to their concerns.

Consider their advice.

Make adjustments when appropriate.

And still remain comfortable with my own choices.

That's freedom.

The Pleasure of Being Yourself

One of the things I enjoy about my life today is its simplicity.

I wear comfortable clothes.

I spend time with Christy.

I greet my neighbours.

I write.

I dream.

And I occasionally become involved in projects that are considerably larger than I probably should undertake on my own.

But I enjoy myself.

I don't feel a particular need to impress anyone.

If someone appreciates what I'm doing, that's lovely.

If they don't, that's perfectly fine too.

Of course, I care about people.

I want to treat them respectfully.

And I value thoughtful opinions.

But caring about people is different from needing their approval.

We can respect others without surrendering our individuality.

We can listen without agreeing.

And we can love people without allowing their expectations to determine our lives.

When Being Right Doesn't Matter

Think about the last disagreement you had.

Perhaps it was with a spouse, friend, family member, or colleague.

How important was the subject?

And how much energy did you spend trying to prove your point?

Sometimes disagreements involve important matters that deserve careful discussion.

But sometimes they're about things that really don't matter very much.

A forgotten detail.

A different preference.

A minor misunderstanding.

And before long, two people who care about one another are frustrated because each wants to be right.

I've come to believe that one of the most useful questions we can ask ourselves is:

"Does this really matter?"

If it does, then by all means, discuss it thoughtfully.

But if it doesn't, perhaps we can simply smile and let it go.

There are far more enjoyable ways to spend our time than winning arguments that nobody needed to have.

A Different Kind of Confidence

I think genuine confidence is often quieter than we imagine.

It doesn't require us to dominate conversations.

It doesn't require constant recognition.

And it doesn't require everyone to agree with us.

It's simply the comfort of knowing that we can make decisions, learn from mistakes, and continue living according to our values.

We don't have to know everything.

We don't have to be right all the time.

And we certainly don't have to impress everyone we meet.

In fact, one of the most liberating things we can say is:

"I don't know."

Followed, perhaps, by:

"But I'd love to learn."

There's something wonderfully refreshing about that.

It leaves room for curiosity.

For growth.

For friendship.

And for the possibility that someone else might have something valuable to teach us.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **Whose approval matters most to you?** Is that influence helping you live authentically, or encouraging you to become someone you're not?
2. **When do you feel the need to prove yourself?** What are you hoping to gain?
3. **What might change if you became more comfortable allowing others to think differently?** Imagine the energy you could save.

Perhaps having nothing to prove doesn't mean we've stopped caring.

Perhaps it means we've finally learned what deserves our attention.

A Thought to Carry With You

The freedom to be yourself begins when you no longer require everyone else to understand, approve of, or agree with the life you've chosen.

Chapter Eight

Making Peace with Yesterday

I wonder how much time we spend thinking about things we can no longer change.

A decision we wish we'd made differently.

Something we said.

Something we didn't say.

An opportunity we missed.

A relationship that ended.

A mistake that still makes us uncomfortable years later.

It's remarkable how easily our minds can return to the past.

And sometimes, we revisit those experiences so often that they begin interfering with the life we're living today.

But here's something I've come to appreciate.

Yesterday is an important part of our story.

It doesn't have to become our permanent address.

The Decisions We Made

I've made thousands of decisions throughout my life.

Some were excellent.

Others were questionable.

And a few, looking back, might have benefited from considerably more thought!

But every decision was made by the person I was at that particular moment.

With the knowledge I possessed.

The circumstances I faced.

And the understanding I had developed.

Today, I may see things differently.

I may recognize possibilities I overlooked.

Or understand consequences I didn't anticipate.

But that's because I've learned something.

And learning is supposed to change our understanding.

It would be rather unfortunate if we reached our sixties and still saw everything exactly as we did at twenty.

So why criticize our younger selves for not possessing the wisdom we've gained through decades of experience?

We can acknowledge mistakes.

Take responsibility.

Make amends when possible.

And learn.

But we don't have to spend the rest of our lives punishing ourselves.

The People Who Hurt Us

Of course, not every painful memory involves something we did.

Sometimes other people disappoint us.

They break promises.

Treat us unfairly.

Say things that hurt.

Or behave in ways we find difficult to understand.

And those experiences can remain with us for years.

Forgiveness is an interesting subject.

Some people believe it means excusing what happened.

Others believe it requires reconciliation.

I see it somewhat differently.

To me, forgiveness can mean deciding that an experience will no longer control how we live.

We can recognize that something was wrong.

We can establish boundaries.

We can protect ourselves from further harm.

And still choose not to carry bitterness into every new day.

Forgiveness doesn't necessarily restore a relationship.

And it doesn't erase consequences.

But it may help us reclaim some of the peace that painful experiences have taken from us.

Sometimes that process takes considerable time.

And that's perfectly understandable.

The Gift of Perspective

One of the advantages of growing older is perspective.

Experiences that once seemed catastrophic can look quite different years later.

A business disappointment may have led us toward another opportunity.

A difficult relationship may have helped us understand what we truly need.

A missed opportunity may have created room for something unexpected.

Not every disappointment becomes a blessing.

And I don't believe we need to pretend otherwise.

Some losses remain painful.

Some experiences change us permanently.

But even then, life can continue offering moments of meaning, connection, and joy.

We don't have to deny the past to appreciate the present.

We simply have to recognize that both can exist.

The Life in Front of Us

These days, I have plenty of reasons to appreciate the present.

I have Christy.

I have neighbours I've come to know.

I have books to write and projects that excite me.

And I have the simple pleasure of waking up each morning with another opportunity to enjoy life.

Could I spend time thinking about things I wish had happened differently?

Certainly.

But what would that accomplish?

Would it make Christy's breakfast taste better?

Would it improve my conversations with neighbours?

Would it help me enjoy today's opportunities?

Probably not.

So I try to learn what I can from yesterday and give my attention to today.

Not always perfectly.

But increasingly.

Because I've come to believe that peace isn't necessarily found in having a perfect past.

It's found in learning how to live comfortably with the past we actually have.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **Is there something from your past that still troubles you?** What makes it difficult to release?
2. **What have you learned from that experience?** Has it changed your understanding of yourself or others?
3. **What would making peace with yesterday look like for you?** Perhaps it involves forgiveness, an apology, acceptance, or simply allowing yourself to move forward.

You cannot change what happened.

But you may be able to change how much of your future it occupies.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your past deserves understanding, not a lifetime of punishment. Learn from yesterday, make peace where you can, and give yourself permission to enjoy today.

Chapter Nine

The Expectations We Carry

There's a rather interesting question I'd like you to consider.

How much of the life you're living is the life you actually chose?

And how much of it developed because of what other people expected?

From childhood, we're surrounded by expectations.

Our parents have ideas about what we should become.

Teachers encourage particular abilities.

Friends influence our interests.

Society tells us what success should look like.

And somewhere along the way, we begin creating expectations of our own.

We should have a successful career.

We should earn a certain amount of money.

We should own a home.

We should be married by a particular age.

We should have everything figured out.

But who decided all these things?

And what happens when our lives don't follow that familiar pattern?

The Life We're Supposed to Live

I think many people spend years pursuing a version of success they never consciously chose.

They follow a career because it seems sensible.

They buy things because others have them.

They accept responsibilities because they feel obligated.

And they postpone experiences that might bring genuine happiness because they believe there are more important things to accomplish first.

Then, one day, they look around and wonder:

"Is this really the life I wanted?"

It's an important question.

And it doesn't necessarily mean they've made poor decisions.

Perhaps they've built a wonderful life.

Perhaps they love their work and family.

But even then, it can be valuable to examine whether their priorities reflect what genuinely matters to them.

Because expectations have a way of becoming invisible.

We follow them for so long that we forget they were choices in the first place.

My Own Unconventional Journey

I certainly haven't followed a particularly conventional path.

I've been involved in professional sports, business, restaurants, writing, and a variety of ambitious projects.

I've pursued opportunities that interested me, sometimes without knowing exactly where they would lead.

And I didn't marry until I was in my sixties.

If I'd measured my life against a traditional timetable, I might have concluded that certain things were happening rather late.

But I don't see it that way.

I met Christy when I met her.

We fell in love when we fell in love.

And we married when the opportunity arose.

Would our relationship have been more meaningful if we'd met thirty years earlier?

Perhaps we would have enjoyed more years together.

But we can't know what that life would have been.

What I do know is that I'm enormously grateful for the life we're sharing now.

And I have no desire to diminish its beauty simply because it arrived differently from what someone might have expected.

The Pressure to Have More

One of the most persistent expectations in modern life is that more is better.

More money.

More possessions.

More recognition.

More experiences.

More success.

And once we've acquired something, we're encouraged to want the next thing.

But I've begun asking myself a rather simple question.

How much do I actually need to be happy?

The answer, I've discovered, is considerably less than I might once have imagined.

I enjoy good food.

I enjoy a comfortable home.

I enjoy spending time with Christy.

I enjoy my neighbourhood.

And I enjoy having meaningful things to do.

Certainly, money has practical importance.

We need to meet our responsibilities.

And financial security can relieve enormous stress.

But beyond those realities, I don't believe accumulating more necessarily guarantees greater happiness.

Sometimes the most valuable experiences cost very little.

A conversation.

A walk.

A shared meal.

A kind gesture.

A loving embrace.

Perhaps we don't always need more.

Perhaps we need to appreciate more fully what we already have.

Giving Yourself Permission

I believe one of the most important things we can do is give ourselves permission to live according to our own values.

That doesn't mean ignoring responsibilities.

Or disregarding the needs of people who depend on us.

But it does mean recognizing that our lives belong to us.

We're allowed to pursue unusual interests.

We're allowed to change direction.

We're allowed to enjoy simple pleasures.

We're allowed to dream big.

And we're allowed to decide that some of the things society considers important simply aren't priorities for us.

For me, that means continuing to dream about A NuVo World while enjoying the little community already forming around me.

It means writing books because I have ideas I want to share.

It means helping at Express Indien because I love bringing people together.

And most importantly, it means making Christy my first priority.

These choices feel right to me.

They reflect what matters most in my life today.

And that is a wonderful place to be.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider three questions.

1. **What expectations have influenced your major life decisions?** Which came from you, and which came from other people?
2. **Are you pursuing something primarily because you believe you should?** Does it genuinely contribute to your happiness or sense of purpose?
3. **What would you give yourself permission to do differently?** Perhaps it's something small that you've been postponing for years.

You don't need to change your entire life.

Sometimes self-discovery simply means recognizing that you have more choices than you imagined.

A Thought to Carry With You

*You don't have to live the life other people imagined for you.
You have the freedom to discover what matters most and create
a life that reflects it.*

Chapter Ten

Let Go and Let God

Five simple words have become the foundation of much of my life.

Let go and let God.

They're easy to say.

Living them is another matter entirely!

Like most people, I enjoy knowing what's going to happen.

When I begin a project, I imagine how it will unfold.

When I make plans, I hope things will proceed smoothly.

And when I believe strongly in an idea, I sometimes wonder why everyone else doesn't immediately recognize its possibilities.

But life rarely unfolds exactly as we imagine.

People have their own priorities.

Circumstances change.

Opportunities appear and disappear.

And sometimes, despite our best efforts, things simply don't work out.

I've learned that trying to control everything is an exhausting way to live.

And, more importantly, it's unnecessary.

Faith Is Not Inactivity

Some people might interpret letting go as giving up.

That's certainly not how I see it.

I believe we should pursue our dreams, take initiative, help others, and make the most of the opportunities before us.

But I also believe there's an enormous difference between doing our best and insisting that everything happen according to our expectations.

For me, faith means trusting God while continuing to do what I believe is right.

I can plant seeds.

I can nurture them.

I can provide the best possible conditions for growth.

But I cannot force them to blossom.

And perhaps I don't need to.

Learning to Trust

I've had many experiences in which things didn't unfold as I expected.

Businesses that struggled.

Projects that developed more slowly than I hoped.

Opportunities that disappeared.

And periods when I simply didn't know what would happen next.

But I've also experienced wonderful surprises.

Meeting Christy is one of them.

I certainly didn't plan to meet the woman I would marry at a local food bank.

And yet, that's precisely what happened.

Today, when I think about our life together, I'm reminded that some of the most beautiful experiences are the ones we never could have arranged ourselves.

That doesn't mean every unexpected event is wonderful.

Life includes genuine hardship.

But it reminds me to remain open to possibility, even when I cannot see what lies ahead.

Peace in the Present

One of the greatest benefits of letting go is the peace it can bring.

When I'm no longer trying to manage every possible outcome, I have more attention available for the life happening right now.

I can enjoy making Christy's breakfast.

I can appreciate a conversation with a neighbour.

I can work on a book without worrying constantly about how many people will read it.

And I can pursue my dreams without making my happiness dependent on their completion.

That is an extraordinary freedom.

It doesn't eliminate responsibility.

It doesn't guarantee success.

But it helps me recognize the difference between what I can do and what I must leave beyond my control.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **What are you trying hardest to control?** Is it something you can genuinely influence?
2. **What would letting go look like?** Could you continue doing your best while releasing some of your anxiety about the outcome?
3. **Where have unexpected circumstances brought something valuable into your life?** What did those experiences teach you about trust?

For me, faith is not about knowing exactly what tomorrow will bring.

It's about trusting God while making the most of today.

A Thought to Carry With You

Do what you can with love, courage, and sincerity. Then allow yourself the peace of knowing that you don't have to control everything.

Chapter Eleven

What Really Makes You Happy?

I have a question for you.

What makes you happy?

Not what you think should make you happy.

Not what other people consider important.

But what genuinely brings you joy?

It's a deceptively simple question.

And I suspect many people would find it surprisingly difficult to answer.

We're surrounded by messages suggesting that happiness is something we have to acquire.

A better job.

A larger home.

A newer car.

More money.

Greater recognition.

And perhaps, once we've obtained enough of these things, we'll finally be satisfied.

But I've come to believe that happiness often has very little to do with how much we possess.

The Happiness We Overlook

Some of my happiest moments are remarkably ordinary.

Sitting with a mug of tea.

Greeting neighbours.

Sharing a meal.

Writing something that might encourage another person.

Or spending a quiet evening with Christy.

None of these experiences requires great wealth.

And none would attract much public attention.

But they make me happy.

I particularly enjoy the little rituals Christy and I have developed.

Her morning tea.

Her Heaven on Earth Bagel.

The affectionate kiss I occasionally receive as a reward for my culinary efforts.

These moments might seem insignificant to someone else.

But to me, they're wonderful.

And I've begun to appreciate that happiness is often found in the experiences we take for granted.

The Difference Between Pleasure and Happiness

Pleasure is wonderful.

A delicious meal.

A favourite song.

A beautiful afternoon.

An exciting sporting event.

I enjoy all of them.

But I believe happiness also involves something deeper.

A sense of connection.

A feeling of purpose.

The knowledge that we're loved.

The satisfaction of contributing something meaningful.

And perhaps most importantly, a growing comfort with the person we are.

Pleasure can brighten a moment.

Meaning can enrich an entire life.

And when we find ways to enjoy both, something beautiful happens.

Finding Your Own Happiness

One of the mistakes we sometimes make is assuming that what makes other people happy should make us happy too.

But we're all different.

Some people love adventure.

Others enjoy peaceful routines.

Some thrive in large groups.

Others prefer quiet conversations.

Some find fulfillment through artistic expression.

Others through caring for people, solving problems, or spending time in nature.

There's no universal formula.

And that's wonderful.

Because self-discovery allows us to recognize what genuinely matters to us rather than constantly comparing our lives with someone else's.

Perhaps the most important question isn't whether our lives look impressive.

Perhaps it's whether they feel meaningful.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **When were you last genuinely happy?** What were you doing, and who was with you?
2. **What simple pleasures do you sometimes overlook?** Could you make more room for them?
3. **Are you postponing happiness until something happens?** What might you enjoy today instead?

You don't have to abandon your ambitions to appreciate your life.

You simply have to remember that happiness doesn't always wait at the finish line.

A Thought to Carry With You

Happiness isn't necessarily something you find after everything falls into place. Sometimes it's what you discover when you appreciate the life already unfolding around you.

Chapter Twelve

The Extraordinary Beauty of Ordinary Things

I wonder how many extraordinary moments we miss because they look so ordinary.

A sunrise.

A friendly smile.

A warm cup of tea.

A child laughing.

A conversation with someone we love.

These experiences happen every day.

And perhaps that's why we sometimes overlook them.

We're so accustomed to their presence that we forget how remarkable they really are.

But what if the ordinary things in life are actually among its greatest treasures?

My Morning Office

For quite some time, I've enjoyed beginning my mornings near the Metro grocery store on Somerled Avenue.

I call it my office.

It's simply a place where I can sit, enjoy the morning, and greet people as they pass.

Over time, I've come to know many of the regulars.

Parents taking children to school.

Neighbours walking dogs.

People heading to work.

And occasionally, someone who stops for a conversation.

There are mornings when very little happens.

Perhaps I see only a few people.

Perhaps everyone is in a hurry.

But I still enjoy being there.

Because I've come to appreciate that being present doesn't require something extraordinary to happen.

Sometimes the pleasure is simply in showing up.

The People Who Make a Neighbourhood

One of the things I love about my neighbourhood is the growing familiarity of the people around me.

A friendly greeting becomes a conversation.

A conversation becomes an acquaintance.

An acquaintance becomes a friendship.

And gradually, a place filled with strangers begins feeling like a community.

I know some neighbours by name.

Others I recognize by their dogs.

And a few I know simply because we've exchanged enough smiles to feel familiar.

These connections may seem small.

But I believe they matter.

A neighbourhood becomes a warmer place when people acknowledge one another.

And sometimes, the difference between feeling invisible and feeling welcome is simply having someone say good morning.

The Art of Noticing

I've come to believe that appreciation is something we can practice.

We can choose to notice the little things.

The way sunlight enters a room.

The pleasure of a comfortable chair.

The smell of something delicious cooking.

The sound of someone laughing.

Or the simple relief of arriving home after a busy day.

None of these experiences is particularly unusual.

But each offers an opportunity to appreciate being alive.

And perhaps that's the secret.

We don't necessarily need more extraordinary experiences.

We may simply need to become more attentive to the experiences we're already having.

A Wonderful Little Feast

Recently, Christy and I celebrated Thanksgiving together.

I prepared our dinner while she enjoyed an afternoon at the spa.

When she returned, cold and wet, I made her a hot chocolate.

Then we sat down to eat.

It was a simple celebration.

Just the two of us.

But it was wonderful.

And afterward, I found myself feeling enormously grateful.

Not because we'd done anything remarkable.

But because we were together, comfortable, and enjoying our lives.

I've experienced some extraordinary moments over the years.

But I wouldn't trade the pleasure of that little Thanksgiving dinner for another trophy.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider three questions.

- 1. What ordinary experiences bring you happiness?**
Think about the things you might overlook because they're so familiar.
- 2. Who makes your everyday life better?** Have you told them how much you appreciate them?
- 3. What could you pay more attention to tomorrow?**
Perhaps something beautiful has been waiting for you to notice it.

The extraordinary isn't always somewhere far away.

Sometimes it's sitting beside us at the dinner table.

A Thought to Carry With You

An extraordinary life isn't necessarily filled with extraordinary events. Sometimes it's simply an ordinary life appreciated extraordinarily well.

Chapter Thirteen

Love Changes Everything

If you had asked me years ago what I considered most important in life, I might have given you a rather lengthy answer.

Success.

Purpose.

Achievement.

Friendship.

Health.

Happiness.

And perhaps a few other things.

Today, my answer would be much simpler.

Love.

Not because the other things have become unimportant.

But because I've come to appreciate how much richer life becomes when love is at its centre.

An Unexpected Beginning

Christy Anne and I met at a local food bank.

There was nothing particularly glamorous about the setting.

No romantic dinner.

No carefully arranged introduction.

Just two people whose paths happened to cross.

And yet, from that ordinary encounter, something extraordinary developed.

We fell in love.

On Valentine's Day in 2025, we were married during a Montreal snowstorm.

And my life changed in ways I could never have anticipated.

For much of my life, I'd been accustomed to making decisions primarily for myself.

I pursued my interests.

Developed my projects.

Followed my dreams.

But marriage introduced something wonderful.

The pleasure of building a life around someone else's happiness as well as my own.

Love Is Often a Verb

I think we sometimes imagine love primarily as a feeling.

And certainly, affection, attraction, and emotional connection are beautiful parts of it.

But I've come to believe that love is also something we do.

It's making someone a cup of tea.

Preparing breakfast.

Listening when they're troubled.

Helping them get comfortable.

Being patient when they're having a difficult day.

Or simply being there.

Christy lives with chronic pain.

There are days when ordinary activities can be difficult.

And I've discovered that helping her feel more comfortable is one of the most meaningful things I can do.

It doesn't require applause.

It doesn't require recognition.

It simply requires love.

And the remarkable thing is how much happiness I receive through giving it.

Love Beyond Romance

Of course, love isn't limited to marriage or romantic relationships.

We express love through friendship.

Through kindness.

Through caring for children, parents, neighbours, and strangers.

Sometimes it takes the form of a generous gesture.

Sometimes a patient conversation.

And sometimes simply acknowledging someone who might otherwise feel forgotten.

I think about the people I greet each morning.

Some are close acquaintances.

Others are people whose names I don't yet know.

But I can still offer a smile.

A kind word.

A moment of attention.

And perhaps that small expression of care will make someone's day a little better.

I like to think so.

Discovering Ourselves Through Love

There's something fascinating about the way love helps us understand ourselves.

When we care deeply for another person, we sometimes discover qualities we didn't realize we possessed.

Patience.

Generosity.

Tenderness.

Compassion.

A willingness to make sacrifices.

And the ability to find joy in another person's happiness.

I've learned a great deal about myself through loving Christy.

And I continue learning.

Not every day is easy.

We have challenges, disagreements, and moments when life requires patience.

But those experiences are part of sharing a life.

Love doesn't eliminate every difficulty.

It gives us another reason to work through them.

A Little Time for Yourself

Consider these questions.

1. **Who has helped you discover something beautiful about yourself?** What did that relationship reveal?
2. **How do you express love?** Through words, actions, time, affection, or simply being present?
3. **Is there someone who might benefit from a little more of your attention?** Perhaps a small gesture could mean more than you imagine.

I believe love is one of the greatest gifts we can give.

And one of the greatest gifts we can receive.

A Thought to Carry With You

Love doesn't simply change the way we feel about another person. It can change the way we understand ourselves — and the way we choose to live.

Chapter Fourteen

The Gift of Being Present

Have you ever arrived somewhere and realized you barely remember the journey?

Perhaps you were driving, walking, or taking the bus.

Your body was there.

But your mind was somewhere else entirely.

Thinking about yesterday.

Planning tomorrow.

Replaying a conversation.

Or worrying about something that might never happen.

It's remarkable how much of our lives we can spend somewhere other than where we actually are.

And here's the interesting thing.

The only moment we can ever truly experience is the one we're living right now.

The Busy Mind

I've always been a dreamer.

Ideas come to me constantly.

A new book.

A community project.

An opportunity to bring people together.

Sometimes one idea leads to another, and before long, I've imagined something considerably larger than what I originally intended!

I enjoy that part of myself.

But I've also learned that constantly thinking about what comes next can interfere with appreciating what's happening now.

It's possible to be sitting with someone we love while mentally working on tomorrow's plans.

Or enjoying a beautiful afternoon while worrying about something that happened last week.

And when we do that, we miss part of the experience.

Not because the moment wasn't worthwhile.

But because we weren't fully there to enjoy it.

The Simple Pleasure of Attention

One of the things I enjoy about walking is that it gives me an opportunity to notice the world around me.

The changing seasons.

The trees.

The people.

The familiar streets of my neighbourhood.

There's no particular destination I need to reach.

No competition to win.

And no requirement to accomplish anything.

I can simply walk.

And occasionally, something wonderful happens.

I notice a detail I've passed a hundred times before.

I encounter someone I haven't seen recently.

Or I find myself feeling grateful for the simple pleasure of being outdoors.

Nothing extraordinary has happened.

But I've enjoyed the moment.

And that is enough.

Being Present with People

I believe one of the most meaningful gifts we can give another person is our attention.

Not half our attention.

Not attention divided between a conversation and a dozen other thoughts.

But the simple act of listening.

Really listening.

When someone speaks, we can allow them to finish.

We can ask questions.

We can be interested.

And we can resist the temptation to turn every conversation back toward ourselves.

I suspect most of us have experienced the pleasure of speaking with someone who genuinely listens.

We feel respected.

We feel valued.

And perhaps, for a little while, we feel less alone.

That is a beautiful gift.

And it costs absolutely nothing.

Today Is the Day

There's an expression I particularly enjoy.

"Someday."

Someday I'll take that trip.

Someday I'll spend more time with my family.

Someday I'll begin writing.

Someday I'll learn to play the piano.

Someday I'll slow down and enjoy life.

But someday has a rather unfortunate habit of remaining somewhere in the future.

And meanwhile, today keeps passing.

I'm not suggesting we abandon planning.

Dreams and goals can enrich our lives enormously.

But perhaps we should be careful not to postpone everything meaningful until circumstances are perfect.

Call the friend.

Take the walk.

Enjoy the meal.

Say the kind words.

Begin the project.

And appreciate the people who are part of your life today.

Because today is where life is happening.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **Where does your mind spend most of its time?** In the past, the future, or the present?
2. **When do you feel most fully engaged in life?** What helps you become absorbed in the moment?
3. **What have you been postponing?** Is there a small part of it you could enjoy today?

Being present doesn't require a special technique.

Sometimes it simply means noticing that we're alive, right here, right now.

A Thought to Carry With You

Don't become so occupied preparing for a wonderful life that you forget to enjoy the wonderful moments already available to you.

Chapter Fifteen

Enough Is a Wonderful Place to Be

I have a rather unusual question for you.

What if you already have enough?

Not necessarily everything you want.

Not everything you've ever dreamed of owning or accomplishing.

But enough to begin enjoying your life more fully.

It's an interesting possibility.

Because we live in a world that constantly encourages us to want more.

More money.

More possessions.

More recognition.

More experiences.

And once we've acquired something, there's usually something else waiting.

But I've begun to wonder whether the endless pursuit of more sometimes prevents us from appreciating what we already have.

The Moving Finish Line

Imagine someone who dreams of earning a certain income.

They work hard.

They achieve their goal.

And for a little while, they're delighted.

But soon, a new goal appears.

A larger income.

A better home.

A newer car.

A more impressive lifestyle.

The finish line keeps moving.

And satisfaction remains just beyond reach.

I've pursued plenty of ambitious goals throughout my life.

And I still enjoy dreaming about extraordinary possibilities.

But I've learned that wanting to accomplish more doesn't have to mean being dissatisfied with what I already have.

Those two feelings can coexist beautifully.

I can be grateful for today while looking forward to tomorrow.

The Difference Between Enough and Giving Up

Some people might interpret being content as a lack of ambition.

I see it quite differently.

Contentment doesn't mean abandoning our dreams.

It means refusing to make our happiness dependent on their completion.

I can work toward helping transform Notre-Dame-de-Grâce into a more caring community.

I can imagine thousands of people benefiting from programs that improve their lives.

I can write books and pursue new ideas.

But I don't have to wait for those things to happen before allowing myself to be happy.

I can enjoy the work itself.

The conversations.

The friendships.

The opportunities to help.

And the satisfaction of taking another small step.

That's a wonderful way to live.

The Richness of Simplicity

Some of the richest experiences in life have very little to do with money.

A beautiful conversation.

A shared laugh.

A favourite song.

A comfortable afternoon.

The pleasure of doing something kind.

Or the satisfaction of knowing we've made someone's day a little brighter.

Of course, financial security matters.

Having enough to meet our needs can relieve tremendous stress.

And for people struggling with basic necessities, the need for more is very real.

But once our essential needs are met, perhaps we can begin asking a different question.

Not, "How much more can I acquire?"

But, "How much more fully can I enjoy what I have?"

That question changes our perspective.

It invites gratitude.

And gratitude has a wonderful way of revealing abundance in places we might otherwise overlook.

A Different Kind of Wealth

I think about the things that make my life feel rich.

Love.

Friendship.

Purpose.

Health and the ability to enjoy daily activities.

Opportunities to learn.

The freedom to imagine new possibilities.

And the pleasure of contributing something meaningful.

Not all of these things are guaranteed.

Some can change unexpectedly.

And perhaps that's another reason to appreciate them while they're present.

Because wealth isn't always something we accumulate.

Sometimes it's something we recognize.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **What do you already have that makes your life feel rich?** Consider relationships, experiences, abilities, and opportunities.
2. **What are you pursuing because you genuinely want it?** And what are you pursuing simply because you feel you should?
3. **What might change if you believed you already had enough to enjoy today?**

Perhaps contentment isn't the end of ambition.

Perhaps it's the beginning of freedom.

A Thought to Carry With You

Enough doesn't mean your dreams are finished. It means you can enjoy your life while your dreams continue to unfold.

Chapter Sixteen

Learning to Listen to Your Heart

Have you ever had a feeling that something was right for you, even though you couldn't explain exactly why?

Perhaps it was an opportunity.

A relationship.

A place you wanted to visit.

Or an idea that kept returning to your thoughts.

You considered the practical details.

You listened to advice.

You examined the possibilities.

But somewhere inside, you already felt drawn toward a particular direction.

I think most of us have experienced something like that.

And I've come to believe it's worth paying attention to.

The Quiet Voice Within

Throughout our lives, we receive an enormous amount of advice.

People tell us what we should do.

What we should avoid.

What's sensible.

What's realistic.

And what they believe will make us happy.

Much of that advice is well-intentioned.

Some of it is extremely valuable.

But ultimately, we're the ones who must live with our decisions.

And sometimes, what appears sensible to someone else doesn't feel particularly meaningful to us.

I've pursued many ideas that weren't conventional.

Some were successful.

Others weren't.

But the experiences I remember most fondly are often those that genuinely excited me.

I felt curious.

Engaged.

Alive.

And eager to discover what might happen.

Those feelings told me something important about my interests and values.

The Difference Between Impulse and Intuition

Of course, following our hearts doesn't mean abandoning good judgment.

Enthusiasm can be wonderful.

But enthusiasm alone doesn't guarantee that an idea is practical.

I've learned that lesson more than once!

Sometimes we need to slow down.

Ask questions.

Consider consequences.

And listen to people who have experience we don't possess.

But careful thinking and heartfelt enthusiasm don't have to be enemies.

They can work together.

Our hearts may help us recognize what matters.

Our minds can help us determine how best to pursue it.

And when the two work in harmony, we often make more thoughtful decisions.

Recognizing What Matters

One way I try to understand my own heart is by noticing what continues to interest me.

Even after the initial excitement has faded.

Even when circumstances become difficult.

Even when nobody is encouraging me.

For years, I've been drawn toward the idea of helping people live happier, healthier, more connected lives.

The particular projects have changed.

But the underlying desire remains.

I enjoy bringing people together.

I enjoy imagining possibilities.

And I enjoy seeing someone benefit from a little encouragement or kindness.

Those recurring interests tell me something about what matters to me.

Perhaps you have similar patterns in your own life.

Things you've always loved.

Causes you've always cared about.

Activities that consistently bring you satisfaction.

Sometimes our hearts have been pointing us in the same direction for years.

We've simply been too busy to notice.

A Little Time for Yourself

- 1. What activities consistently make you feel alive?**
What do they reveal about your interests?
- 2. Have you been ignoring something that matters deeply to you?** What's been holding you back?
- 3. What decision might become clearer if you considered both your feelings and the practical realities?**

You don't have to make dramatic changes.

Sometimes listening to your heart simply means giving a little more attention to something you've always loved.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your heart may not tell you exactly how to reach your destination, but it can help you recognize which journeys are worth taking.

Chapter Seventeen

The Courage to Be Different

Wouldn't life be rather boring if everyone were exactly the same?

Imagine a world in which everyone had identical interests.

The same opinions.

The same ambitions.

The same personalities.

And the same ideas about how life should be lived.

There would certainly be fewer disagreements.

But I suspect there would also be considerably less creativity, discovery, and excitement.

Our differences are among the things that make life interesting.

And yet, many people spend years trying to fit in.

The Pressure to Belong

We all want to feel accepted.

It's a natural human desire.

We enjoy being part of a family, a group of friends, or a community.

But sometimes the desire to belong encourages us to hide parts of ourselves.

We hesitate to express unusual opinions.

We abandon interests because others don't share them.

Or we avoid pursuing dreams because we're afraid someone might laugh.

I think that's unfortunate.

Because the qualities that make us different may also be among our greatest gifts.

A Rather Unconventional Dreamer

I've never been particularly reluctant to imagine unusual possibilities.

Over the years, I've developed businesses, written books, and pursued ideas that might have seemed ambitious to other people.

Today, one of my greatest dreams is to help create A NuVo World.

A world in which communities become more caring, connected, and supportive.

A world in which people have greater opportunities to enjoy healthy, meaningful lives.

And a world in which we place more importance on helping one another.

It's an enormous vision.

Some people may find it inspiring.

Others may consider it unrealistic.

And that's perfectly fine.

I don't expect everyone to share my dreams.

But I don't believe the fact that an idea is unusual makes it unworthy of consideration.

Many worthwhile changes began with someone imagining that things could be different.

Different Doesn't Mean Better

There's an important distinction I'd like to make.

Being different doesn't make us superior.

It simply makes us individuals.

Someone who enjoys a quiet, predictable life isn't less interesting than someone who pursues enormous adventures.

A person who loves gardening isn't less valuable than someone who builds businesses.

And someone who prefers spending time alone isn't less worthy than someone who enjoys meeting hundreds of people.

We all have different temperaments.

Different abilities.

Different interests.

And different ways of contributing to the world.

The goal isn't to become more unusual.

It's to become more comfortable being ourselves.

The Courage to Be Seen

Sometimes being ourselves requires courage.

We may have to express an opinion that others don't share.

Pursue an interest that seems unconventional.

Or make a choice that disappoints someone whose approval matters to us.

That doesn't mean we should become inconsiderate.

We can respect other people's feelings while remaining faithful to our own values.

We can listen thoughtfully without abandoning our individuality.

And we can disagree without becoming unkind.

I think genuine confidence includes the ability to say:

"This is who I am."

Not defensively.

Not arrogantly.

But comfortably.

And perhaps that's one of the most beautiful aspects of self-discovery.

We gradually become less concerned with fitting into someone else's expectations.

And more interested in living a life that feels genuinely our own.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **What makes you different?** Consider your interests, values, personality, and way of looking at the world.
2. **Have you ever hidden part of yourself to gain approval?** What might happen if you became more comfortable expressing it?
3. **What unusual dream or interest would you like to explore?** Is there a small step you could take?

The world doesn't need everyone to become the same.

It needs people willing to contribute their individual gifts.

A Thought to Carry With You

You don't have to become different to be special. You simply have to recognize that being yourself is already something worth celebrating.

Chapter Eighteen

Discovering Your Gifts

I believe every person has something special to offer the world.

Not necessarily an extraordinary talent.

Not something that will make them famous.

But a quality, an ability, or a natural inclination that can enrich their own life and the lives of others.

And sometimes, the most wonderful gifts are the ones we barely recognize in ourselves.

What Comes Naturally?

Have you ever noticed that something you find easy can be difficult for someone else?

Perhaps you're a wonderful listener.

You can sit with someone who's troubled and make them feel understood.

Or perhaps you have a gift for organizing things.

You can walk into a confusing situation and immediately recognize what needs to be done.

Maybe you're creative.

You enjoy painting, cooking, gardening, writing, or finding unusual solutions to everyday problems.

Or perhaps you're simply good at making people feel welcome.

These abilities may seem ordinary to you.

After all, they're part of who you are.

But to someone else, they can be extraordinary.

The Gifts We Overlook

For much of my life, I associated gifts with accomplishments.

Athletic ability.

Business skills.

Creativity.

The capacity to pursue ambitious ideas.

And certainly, those are gifts.

But lately, I've come to appreciate something else.

The ability to connect with people.

I genuinely enjoy meeting someone new.

Starting a conversation.

Sharing a laugh.

And helping people feel comfortable.

It's something I've done throughout my life, in different circumstances.

As a sports professional.

As a restaurant owner.

And now, as someone who enjoys helping bring neighbours together.

I don't have to be the most talented person in the room.

I simply have to enjoy being there.

And perhaps that enjoyment is part of my gift.

Gifts Are Meant to Be Shared

Imagine someone who has a beautiful singing voice but never sings because they're afraid of criticism.

Or someone who loves teaching but never offers to help another person learn.

Or someone with a wonderful sense of humour who keeps it hidden because they're worried about appearing foolish.

What a shame that would be.

Our gifts don't have to become careers.

They don't have to generate income.

And they certainly don't have to earn recognition.

Sometimes sharing a gift is as simple as doing something we enjoy in a way that benefits someone else.

A neighbour who loves baking might share a loaf of bread.

Someone who enjoys gardening might help beautify a community space.

A retired professional might mentor a young person.

And someone who enjoys conversation might brighten the day of a person who lives alone.

Small gifts.

Wonderful possibilities.

You May Have More Than One

Another interesting thing about gifts is that they can change and develop.

We may discover new abilities later in life.

Someone who never considered themselves artistic might begin painting at seventy.

A person who spent decades working with numbers might discover a passion for music.

And someone who has always been quiet might become a remarkable community leader when an issue touches their heart.

We don't have to know all our gifts in advance.

Sometimes we discover them simply by trying something new.

And perhaps that's part of the adventure.

A Little Time for Yourself

- 1. What do people naturally come to you for?** Advice, encouragement, practical help, humour, or something else?
- 2. What activities feel enjoyable and natural to you?** Could they reveal abilities you've overlooked?
- 3. How might you share one of your gifts?** Think of something small you could do this week.

You don't need to become extraordinary to make a meaningful contribution.

Sometimes you simply need to recognize what's already within you.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your greatest gifts may not be the things that bring you recognition. They may be the qualities that allow you to bring something wonderful into another person's life.

Chapter Nineteen

The Purpose Hidden in Everyday Life

Have you ever wondered what your purpose in life might be?

It's a rather enormous question.

And I suspect many people spend years searching for an equally enormous answer.

Perhaps they imagine their purpose must involve some extraordinary accomplishment.

Building a successful business.

Creating a remarkable invention.

Writing an important book.

Or making a contribution that changes the world.

Those can certainly be worthwhile pursuits.

But what if purpose is often much closer than we imagine?

The Search for Something Meaningful

For much of my life, I've enjoyed pursuing ambitious goals.

And I still do.

I love imagining possibilities.

Developing ideas.

And working toward something I believe might make a difference.

But I've begun appreciating that purpose doesn't always require a grand project.

Sometimes it reveals itself through ordinary responsibilities.

A parent caring for a child.

A friend offering encouragement.

A neighbour helping someone carry groceries.

A teacher taking a few extra minutes with a struggling student.

These moments may seem insignificant.

But they can have a lasting impact.

And perhaps that's what makes them meaningful.

The Difference We Never See

Imagine holding a door open for someone who's having a difficult day.

You smile.

They smile.

And you continue on your way.

You may never know whether that simple kindness made a difference.

Perhaps it did.

Perhaps it didn't.

But the gesture still reflected something valuable.

You chose to be considerate.

You chose to acknowledge another person.

And you contributed a little kindness to the world.

I think we sometimes underestimate the importance of these moments because we cannot measure their results.

But not everything worthwhile can be measured.

A thoughtful word.

A reassuring presence.

A moment of patience.

These experiences can matter enormously, even when nobody keeps track.

Purpose Can Change

One of the things I find encouraging is that our sense of purpose can evolve.

At one stage of life, we may be focused on raising children.

At another, developing a career.

Later, perhaps caring for someone we love or contributing to our community.

And sometimes, several purposes exist together.

We don't have to choose one grand mission and pursue it forever.

Life changes.

Our circumstances change.

And new opportunities to contribute appear.

For me, helping Christy enjoy the best possible day is meaningful.

So is writing something that might encourage a reader.

Or helping people connect through The Gathering at Express Indien.

These activities are quite different.

But they share something important.

They involve contributing to the happiness or well-being of others.

And that gives them meaning.

The Purpose of Enjoying Life

There's another possibility I'd like you to consider.

Perhaps part of our purpose is simply to enjoy being alive.

To appreciate beauty.

To experience love.

To develop friendships.

To laugh.

To learn.

And to discover the extraordinary possibilities within ordinary days.

I don't believe life has to be one continuous exercise in productivity.

We're allowed to rest.

We're allowed to play.

And we're allowed to enjoy experiences that don't accomplish anything beyond making us happy.

A meaningful life can include contribution and enjoyment.

Responsibility and freedom.

Ambition and contentment.

Perhaps the secret isn't finding one perfect purpose.

Perhaps it's recognizing the many ways life can be meaningful.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **When do you feel that your life is meaningful?** What are you doing in those moments?
2. **Who benefits from your presence?** Consider the people whose lives are better because you're part of them.
3. **Are you overlooking simple opportunities to contribute?** What small act might bring meaning to tomorrow?

You don't have to discover some extraordinary mission before your life can matter.

It already does.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your purpose may not be hidden somewhere in the distant future. It may be waiting in the opportunities to love, contribute, and enjoy life that are already before you.

Chapter Twenty

Becoming Comfortable in Your Own Skin

I have a rather wonderful ambition for the rest of my life.

I want to become increasingly comfortable being me.

Not a more impressive version of myself.

Not someone who meets everybody else's expectations.

Just me.

With my strengths.

My weaknesses.

My dreams.

My peculiarities.

And the occasional tendency to become rather enthusiastic about ideas that might take considerably more work than I originally imagined!

I think that would be a wonderful way to live.

The Exhaustion of Pretending

Have you ever spent time with people around whom you felt you had to behave differently?

Perhaps you were careful about what you said.

Concerned about how you looked.

Or worried that expressing your genuine opinions might lead to criticism.

It can be exhausting.

We become so occupied managing other people's impressions that we lose the pleasure of simply being ourselves.

And sometimes, after years of doing this, we begin forgetting what we actually prefer.

We know what our families expect.

What our colleagues admire.

And what society considers successful.

But we're less certain about what genuinely makes us happy.

I believe becoming comfortable in our own skin begins with recognizing that we don't have to perform for everyone we meet.

Accepting Our Imperfections

Let's acknowledge something.

None of us is perfect.

We make mistakes.

We occasionally say things we wish we'd expressed differently.

We misunderstand people.

We become impatient.

And sometimes we make decisions that turn out to be less than brilliant.

Welcome to being human!

The goal isn't to eliminate every imperfection.

It's to recognize our shortcomings without allowing them to destroy our self-respect.

We can apologize when we're wrong.

Learn from experience.

And continue trying to become kinder, wiser, and more understanding.

But we don't have to dislike ourselves in the process.

I think self-acceptance and personal growth can exist beautifully together.

We can appreciate who we are while continuing to learn.

The Pleasure of Simplicity

One of the things I enjoy about my life today is that I don't feel a particular need to make it appear impressive.

I'm happy wearing comfortable clothes.

Enjoying my morning tea.

Taking a walk.

Writing.

And spending time with people I care about.

I don't need every day to be filled with extraordinary activity.

Nor do I need everyone to understand my dreams.

I know what matters to me.

And I'm increasingly comfortable living accordingly.

That doesn't mean I've stopped caring about the world.

Quite the opposite.

I still have ambitious ideas.

But I no longer believe I have to become someone different before I can enjoy pursuing them.

The Freedom to Be Genuine

There's something refreshing about people who are comfortable with themselves.

They don't need to dominate every conversation.

They can admit when they don't know something.

They can laugh at their mistakes.

And they don't feel threatened when someone else has a different opinion.

They simply enjoy being who they are.

I admire that.

And I believe it's something we can all develop.

Not overnight.

And not by pretending our insecurities don't exist.

But gradually, through self-understanding, acceptance, and the willingness to live according to our values.

Perhaps genuine confidence isn't believing we're better than anyone else.

Perhaps it's recognizing that we don't need to be.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **When do you feel most comfortable being yourself?**
What makes those circumstances different?

2. **What imperfections have you been unnecessarily critical of?** Could you approach them with greater understanding?
3. **What would you do differently if you felt completely comfortable with who you are?**

You don't have to become perfect.

You simply have to become more accepting of the wonderfully imperfect person you already are.

A Thought to Carry With You

Being comfortable in your own skin doesn't mean believing you have nothing left to learn. It means knowing you're worthy of love and respect while you continue growing.

Chapter Twenty-One

It Is Never Too Late

I recently celebrated my 66th birthday.

And I have to tell you something.

I'm still excited about life.

I have books I want to write.

Ideas I want to explore.

People I want to meet.

And dreams I would love to see become reality.

I certainly don't feel that my opportunities have come to an end.

In fact, in some ways, I feel as though a wonderful new chapter is just beginning.

And that brings me to something I believe very strongly.

It is never too late to begin again.

The Myth of Being Too Old

We live in a society that sometimes places unnecessary limits on age.

We're encouraged to accomplish certain things by certain times.

Complete our education.

Establish a career.

Build a family.

Achieve financial security.

And eventually, retire.

There's nothing wrong with following that path.

But it's not the only way to live.

And reaching a particular age doesn't mean our opportunities have disappeared.

People begin new careers later in life.

They discover artistic abilities.

Develop friendships.

Travel.

Volunteer.

Fall in love.

And pursue dreams they never had time to explore earlier.

Why should curiosity have an expiration date?

The Advantage of Experience

One of the wonderful things about growing older is that we accumulate experience.

We've made mistakes.

We've learned lessons.

We've developed skills.

And hopefully, we've gained a little wisdom.

Those experiences can become tremendous advantages.

We may be more patient.

More understanding.

Less concerned about what other people think.

And better able to recognize what truly matters.

Of course, aging can bring challenges.

Our energy may change.

Our health may require more attention.

And some opportunities may no longer be practical.

But that doesn't mean meaningful possibilities disappear.

They may simply take different forms.

A Love Story That Began Later

If anyone had told me years ago that I would meet the woman I'd marry in my sixties, I wonder what I would have thought.

But that's exactly what happened.

Christy and I met unexpectedly.

We fell in love.

And we married on Valentine's Day in 2025.

What a wonderful surprise.

Our relationship reminds me that life doesn't always follow a conventional timetable.

Sometimes something beautiful arrives long after we expected it.

And sometimes we discover that we're more ready to appreciate it than we might have been years earlier.

I don't spend time wishing we'd met sooner.

I'm grateful that we met at all.

And I want to enjoy every day we're fortunate enough to share.

Beginning Doesn't Require Starting Over

When people hear the words "begin again," they sometimes imagine making enormous changes.

Selling their home.

Changing careers.

Moving somewhere new.

Or completely reinventing themselves.

But new beginnings don't have to be dramatic.

They can be wonderfully simple.

Learning a new skill.

Joining a community group.

Beginning a friendship.

Returning to an old hobby.

Writing a story.

Or deciding to approach life with a little more enthusiasm.

Sometimes the most important new beginning is simply a change in perspective.

We stop believing our best days are behind us.

And begin looking forward to the possibilities still ahead.

The Adventure Continues

I don't know exactly what the coming years will bring.

I have ideas.

Plenty of them!

But I've learned that life has a way of introducing possibilities we never anticipated.

And I find that exciting.

I want to remain curious.

Keep learning.

Continue loving.

And enjoy the opportunities that come my way.

Perhaps some of my dreams will become reality.

Perhaps others will lead me toward something unexpected.

Either way, I intend to enjoy the adventure.

Because as long as we're alive, there's still something to discover.

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **Is there something you've decided you're too old to begin?** Is that conclusion really justified?
2. **What experiences or abilities have you gained with age?** How might they help you pursue something meaningful?
3. **What new beginning would excite you?** Could you take one small step toward it?

You don't need to know how everything will unfold.

Sometimes you simply need to remain open to possibility.

A Thought to Carry With You

Your age tells you how many years you've lived. It doesn't tell you how much life you still have to enjoy.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The People Who Help Us Become Ourselves

I sometimes wonder how different my life would have been if I hadn't met certain people along the way.

Teachers who encouraged me.

Friends who believed in me.

People who offered opportunities.

And others who appeared unexpectedly, stayed for a little while, and somehow changed the direction of my life.

It's remarkable how much influence one person can have.

Sometimes without even realizing it.

The People Who See Something in Us

Have you ever had someone recognize an ability in you that you hadn't noticed yourself?

Perhaps a teacher encouraged you to pursue a subject.

A coach recognized your potential.

Or a friend suggested you try something new.

Their encouragement may have seemed insignificant to them.

But to you, it opened a door.

I think one of the most wonderful things we can do for another person is help them recognize something beautiful about themselves.

Not through exaggerated praise.

But through genuine attention and encouragement.

Sometimes people need someone else to believe in them before they're ready to believe in themselves.

The Unexpected Teachers

Not everyone who influences us does so through kindness.

Some people challenge us.

Others disappoint us.

And occasionally, someone behaves in a way that teaches us precisely how we don't want to treat others.

These experiences can be difficult.

But they can also help clarify our values.

We discover what matters to us.

What we're willing to accept.

And what kind of person we want to become.

That doesn't mean we should be grateful for every painful experience.

But we can sometimes learn something valuable from circumstances we wouldn't have chosen.

The Gift of Friendship

One of the things I appreciate most about my life today is the growing collection of people I know in my neighbourhood.

Some have become friends.

Others are familiar faces.

And a few are people with whom I've shared only brief conversations.

But each connection adds something to my day.

I enjoy learning about people's lives.

Their interests.

Their families.

Their hopes.

And occasionally, the challenges they're facing.

These conversations remind me that everyone has a story.

And that we can learn something from almost anyone if we're willing to listen.

Becoming That Person for Someone Else

Here's a thought I particularly enjoy.

While we're remembering the people who have influenced our lives, someone else may be remembering us.

Perhaps we offered encouragement at an important moment.

Perhaps we helped someone who was struggling.

Or perhaps we simply treated someone with kindness when they needed it most.

We may never know.

But isn't it wonderful to imagine that something we did made another person's journey a little easier?

We don't have to become famous to influence lives.

Sometimes we simply have to care.

A Little Time for Yourself

- 1. Who has had the greatest positive influence on your life?** What did that person help you discover?
- 2. Is there someone you've never properly thanked?**
Perhaps this would be a wonderful time.
- 3. Who might benefit from your encouragement today?**
A few sincere words could mean more than you imagine.

A Thought to Carry With You

We become ourselves through our own choices, but the people we meet along the way can help us discover possibilities we might never have recognized alone.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Wonderful Adventure of Not Knowing

I have a confession to make.

I don't know exactly what my future holds.

And I'm becoming increasingly comfortable with that.

There was a time when I wanted to know how everything would unfold.

I liked making plans.

Setting goals.

Imagining outcomes.

And believing that if I worked hard enough, things would happen more or less as expected.

But life has taught me otherwise.

And I've discovered something rather wonderful.

Not knowing can be part of the adventure.

The Comfort of Certainty

Most of us enjoy certainty.

We like knowing what tomorrow will bring.

We feel comfortable with familiar routines.

And we appreciate the sense that our lives are reasonably predictable.

There's nothing wrong with that.

But certainty has its limitations.

If everything unfolded exactly as expected, there would be very little room for surprise.

And some of life's most wonderful experiences begin with something we never anticipated.

A chance encounter.

An unexpected invitation.

A new friendship.

Or an opportunity we hadn't even considered.

Sometimes the unknown contains possibilities far more interesting than the future we'd planned.

Learning to Be Curious

I've always enjoyed asking a particular question.

"What if?"

What if we tried something different?

What if we brought these people together?

What if an ordinary idea could become something extraordinary?

That question has led me toward all sorts of adventures.

Some successful.

Some disappointing.

And some that developed in ways I never imagined.

But each began with curiosity.

And I believe curiosity is one of the qualities that keeps life interesting.

We don't have to know every answer before asking another question.

We don't have to understand every possibility before exploring it.

Sometimes we simply have to remain open.

When Uncertainty Is Difficult

Of course, not knowing isn't always exciting.

Sometimes uncertainty involves serious concerns.

Health.

Finances.

Relationships.

Or the well-being of someone we love.

In those circumstances, uncertainty can be frightening.

And I wouldn't suggest that a cheerful attitude makes every difficulty disappear.

Sometimes we need advice.

Practical assistance.

Professional support.

Or simply someone who will listen.

But even during difficult periods, we can remind ourselves that not knowing the outcome doesn't necessarily mean the outcome will be bad.

We can take reasonable steps.

Seek help when necessary.

And avoid treating every unanswered question as a prediction of disaster.

Leaving Room for Wonder

I think one of the most beautiful things about life is that there are still surprises waiting.

People we haven't met.

Places we haven't visited.

Ideas we haven't considered.

And experiences that may change the way we see the world.

At 66, I find that enormously encouraging.

I don't need to know exactly what comes next.

I simply want to remain interested.

Interested in people.

Interested in learning.

Interested in possibilities.

And interested in the extraordinary experience of being alive.

A Little Time for Yourself

- 1. How comfortable are you with uncertainty?** Do unanswered questions make you curious or anxious?
- 2. When has an unexpected experience brought something wonderful into your life?**
- 3. What possibility would you enjoy exploring without needing to know the outcome?**

Perhaps the future doesn't have to be completely understood before we can look forward to it.

A Thought to Carry With You

You don't have to know what tomorrow will bring to appreciate the wonderful possibility that it may bring something you never imagined.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Becoming a Gift to the World

I have a dream.

Actually, I have quite a few!

But there's one idea that has become particularly important to me.

I want to help create a world in which people care more deeply about one another.

A world in which communities feel like communities.

Where neighbours know each other.

Where people have opportunities to live healthy, happy, meaningful lives.

And where kindness is considered one of the most valuable things we can offer.

I call that vision A NuVo World.

It's an enormous dream.

But I've come to appreciate that enormous dreams often begin with remarkably small actions.

The Power of One Person

Sometimes people look at the problems facing the world and feel overwhelmed.

Poverty.

Loneliness.

Illness.

Conflict.

Inequality.

The challenges seem so enormous that it's difficult to imagine how one person could make a difference.

But here's something worth considering.

We don't have to solve every problem to improve someone's life.

We can help one person.

Encourage one neighbour.

Support one family.

Or bring a few people together.

And perhaps those actions will inspire others.

One person helps another.

That person helps someone else.

And gradually, kindness begins spreading.

Not because anyone has developed a perfect plan.

But because people have decided to care.

The Community Around Us

I believe our neighbourhoods offer wonderful opportunities to make a difference.

We don't necessarily need large organizations or enormous budgets.

Sometimes we simply need people who are willing to participate.

Imagine a neighbourhood where residents regularly greet one another.

Where local businesses become gathering places.

Where older people feel included.

Where children grow up surrounded by friendly, familiar faces.

And where someone experiencing difficulty knows there are people nearby who care.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

And perhaps the first step is something as simple as introducing ourselves to a neighbour.

Giving Without Keeping Score

There's something especially beautiful about helping someone without expecting anything in return.

Not recognition.

Not payment.

Not even gratitude.

Simply the satisfaction of knowing we've done something worthwhile.

Of course, we all have limits.

We need to care for ourselves and fulfill our responsibilities.

And generosity should never require us to neglect our own well-being.

But within those limits, there are countless opportunities to contribute.

Our time.

Our knowledge.

Our encouragement.

Our attention.

And sometimes, simply our presence.

We don't have to give everything.

We simply have to recognize that we have something to give.

A World of Possibility

I don't know whether every aspect of my vision for A NuVo World will become reality.

But I do know something.

Every act of kindness matters to the person who receives it.

Every friendship enriches the lives of the people involved.

And every effort to bring people together creates the possibility of something wonderful.

That's reason enough for me to continue.

Because perhaps changing the world isn't always about accomplishing something enormous.

Perhaps it's about making the little part of the world we touch a little better.

And if enough of us do that, who knows what might become possible?

A Little Time for Yourself

1. **What concerns you most about the world around you?** Is there a small way you could contribute?
2. **What do you have to offer?** Consider your time, abilities, experience, or simple willingness to care.
3. **What one action could you take to make someone's life a little better?**

You don't have to wait until you're wealthy, successful, or influential.

You can begin with what you have.

Right where you are.

A Thought to Carry With You

You don't have to change the entire world to make a difference. Sometimes changing one person's day is a wonderful place to begin.

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Art of Becoming You

And so we've arrived at the final chapter of our journey together.

Although, of course, your journey is far from finished.

In fact, I hope this book has helped you recognize that some of the most wonderful discoveries may still lie ahead.

We've explored our identities.

The stories we tell ourselves.

The expectations we carry.

The importance of love, happiness, purpose, and self-acceptance.

And the freedom that comes from learning to appreciate who we are.

But perhaps the most important discovery is also the simplest.

You don't have to become someone else to live a beautiful life.

The Person You've Always Been

Think about yourself as a child.

Before the world began telling you what success should look like.

Before you accumulated responsibilities.

Before you learned to compare yourself with other people.

What brought you joy?

What excited your curiosity?

What made you laugh?

What did you dream about?

Some of those interests may have changed.

Others may have disappeared entirely.

But perhaps certain qualities have remained.

Your sense of humour.

Your compassion.

Your creativity.

Your curiosity.

Your love of people.

Or your desire to make something better.

These qualities may have expressed themselves differently throughout your life.

But they've always been part of your story.

And perhaps becoming yourself involves recognizing and appreciating them more fully.

You Are a Work in Progress

One of the things I find most encouraging about life is that we never have to stop learning.

We can develop new interests.

Change our minds.

Improve our relationships.

Recognize mistakes.

And discover possibilities we never imagined.

But personal growth doesn't require us to dislike who we are today.

We can be grateful for the person we've become while remaining curious about the person we're becoming.

That's an important distinction.

Because life isn't a competition to achieve some perfect version of ourselves.

It's an opportunity to experience, learn, love, contribute, and enjoy.

And perhaps the real art is learning to appreciate the journey.

The Life You Choose

As you continue beyond these pages, I hope you'll give yourself permission to live according to what genuinely matters to you.

Not what society expects.

Not what someone else considers impressive.

But what reflects your own values, interests, and dreams.

Perhaps you'll pursue something ambitious.

Perhaps you'll simplify your life.

Perhaps you'll develop a new friendship, discover an unexpected interest, or spend more time with people you love.

There are countless possibilities.

And no single formula for a meaningful life.

What matters is that the choices increasingly become your own.

A Wonderful Adventure

I have no idea exactly what the coming years will bring.

But I'm excited to find out.

I want to continue writing.

Continue dreaming.

Continue helping people.

And, most importantly, continue enjoying life with Christy.

I expect there will be challenges.

There always are.

But I also expect laughter, friendship, surprises, and countless little moments worth appreciating.

And I hope the same will be true for you.

Because the art of becoming you isn't something you complete.

It's something you practice.

Every day.

Through your choices.

Your relationships.

Your willingness to learn.

And your growing appreciation for the remarkable person you already are.

A Little Time for Yourself

As we conclude, I'd like you to consider three final questions.

- 1. What have you discovered about yourself while reading this book?**
- 2. What would you like to appreciate more fully about the person you already are?**
- 3. What is one way you would like to live differently beginning today?**

You don't need to transform your entire life.

Perhaps one small change will be enough to begin.

A Thought to Carry With You

The art of becoming you isn't about creating a perfect person. It's about discovering, accepting, and celebrating the wonderfully unique person you've been all along.

Epilogue

You Were Here All Along

Before we say goodbye, I'd like to share one final thought.

For much of our lives, we can find ourselves searching.

Searching for success.

For happiness.

For love.

For purpose.

And perhaps, most importantly, for ourselves.

We imagine that somewhere in the future we'll finally become the person we're meant to be.

After we've accomplished enough.

Learned enough.

Earned enough.

Or overcome enough of our imperfections.

But what if we've been looking in the wrong direction?

What if the person we've been searching for has been here all along?

Not perfect.

Not finished.

But already worthy of love, happiness, and a meaningful life.

Perhaps we don't need to become someone extraordinary.

Perhaps we simply need to recognize how extraordinary it is to be ourselves.

I hope you'll continue dreaming.

Continue learning.

Continue loving.

And continue discovering the wonderful possibilities life has to offer.

But above all, I hope you'll remember to enjoy the journey.

Because this is your life.

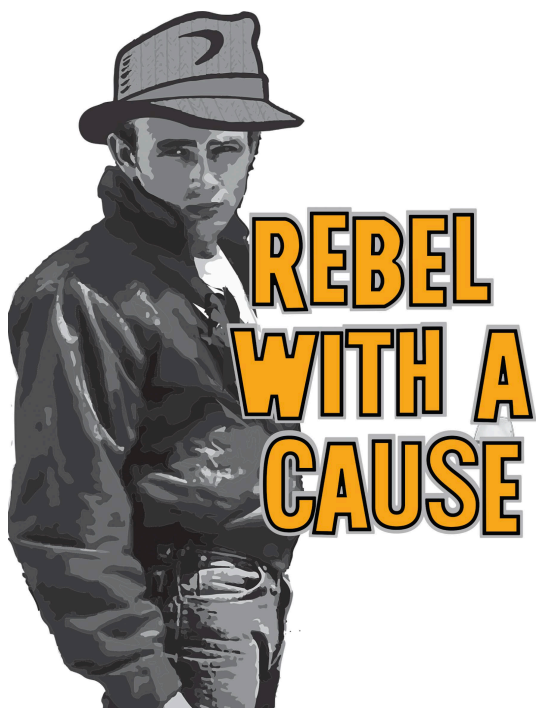
Your one extraordinary adventure.

And you don't have to wait until tomorrow to begin appreciating it.

You were here all along.

With love,

Ross Harvey



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