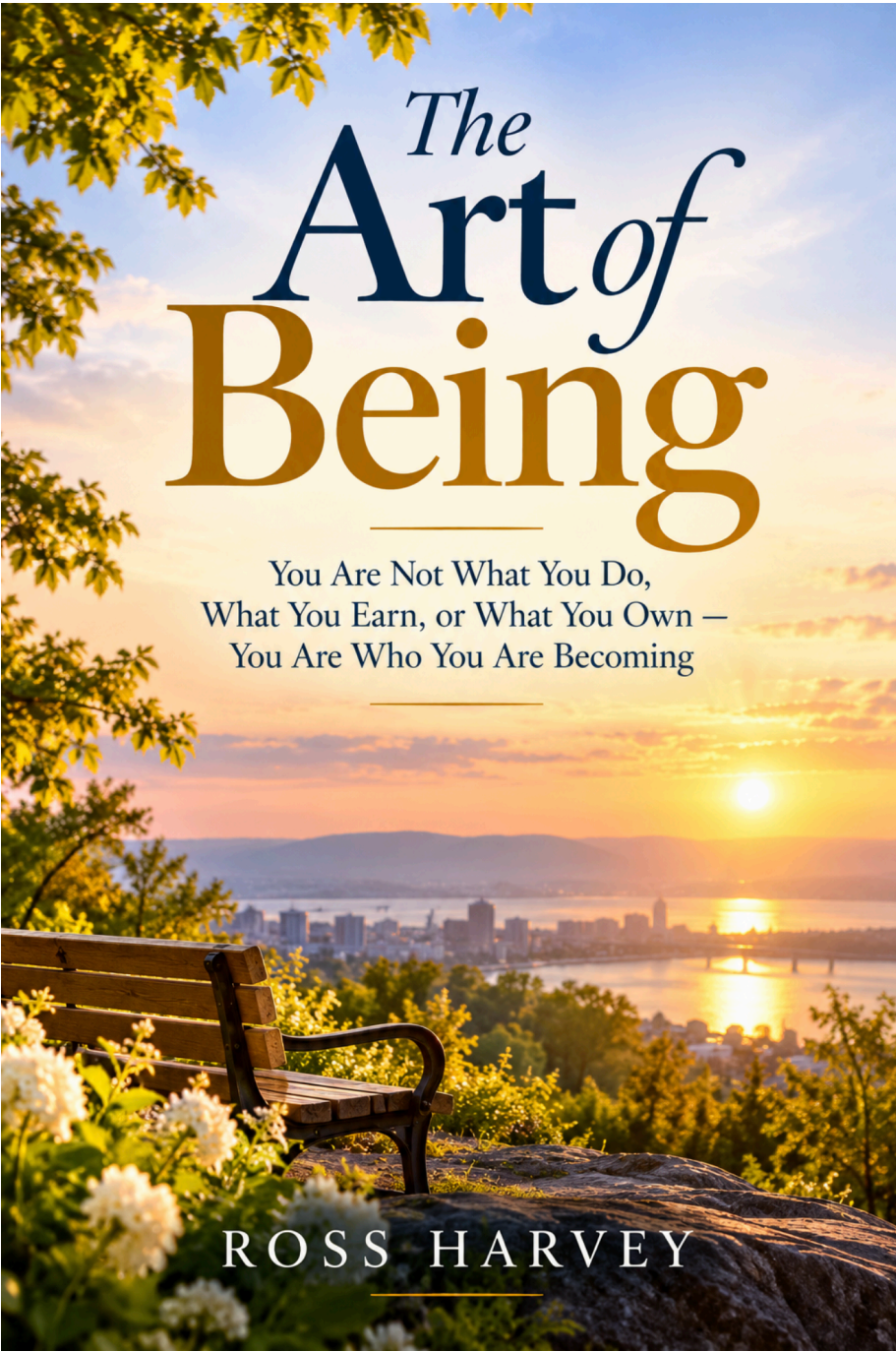




The **Art of** **Being**

You Are Not What You Do,
What You Earn, or What You Own —
You Are Who You Are Becoming

ROSS HARVEY

Foreword

For Scott D. — And Everyone Who Has Ever Wondered Whether They Are Enough

By Ross Harvey

Dear Scott,

I want to begin this book with you.

Not because you are famous. Not because you have accumulated extraordinary wealth. Not because the world has bestowed upon you some great honour or recognition.

I want to begin with you because you reminded me of something I believe the whole world needs to understand.

The value of a human life has absolutely nothing to do with the size of a paycheck, the importance of a job title, or the number of accomplishments listed on a résumé.

It has everything to do with the human being living that life.

And Scott, that means you.

I met you in a Dollarama store in Montreal.

You were stocking shelves.

I was there to purchase a few ordinary things, and what might have been an entirely unremarkable encounter became something much more meaningful.

We began talking.

You told me a little about your life. You had worked in engineering, travelled the world, and spent some twenty-five years involved with major companies and significant projects. You had experienced a professional life that many people might regard as successful.

And now you were working at Dollarama, earning approximately sixteen dollars an hour.

You also shared something of your personal journey. You had once imagined a life that included a lasting relationship and children. You had invested years of yourself in someone you loved, supporting her dreams and ambitions. But that relationship ended, and with it, some of the future you had envisioned.

As I listened, I became aware of the distance between the life you had once imagined and the life you were living.

And I found myself thinking about something.

What if your life has not become less valuable at all?

What if the man stocking shelves at Dollarama is every bit as worthy, every bit as remarkable, and every bit as capable of experiencing a magnificent life as the man who once worked on engineering projects around the world?

What if nothing essential about your worth has changed?

And what if the greatest opportunity before you is not simply to recover the life you once had, but to discover how beautiful the life you have right now can become?

Scott, I don't pretend to know everything you have experienced. I don't know the full measure of your disappointments, your hopes, your private struggles, or the dreams you may still carry.

But I do know something about having one's life change in ways that were never anticipated.

I have experienced considerable professional success in my own life. I have been a world champion in racquetball. I have owned businesses, developed projects, created organizations, written books, and pursued dreams that seemed almost impossibly large.

I have also experienced tremendous reversals.

Since 2003, following a psychiatric diagnosis with which I have profoundly disagreed, I have lived for many years below the poverty line.

There was a time when I might have measured my life by the things I accomplished, the businesses I developed, the recognition I received, or the money I earned.

Today, I measure it very differently.

I measure it in love.

In laughter.

In the extraordinary pleasure of sharing my life with my wonderful wife, Christy Anne.

In the joy of greeting neighbours on the streets of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce each morning.

In the happiness of a conversation with someone I have never met before.

In the satisfaction of making another human being smile.

In the simple pleasure of a wonderful meal, a beautiful piece of music, a warm embrace, or an unexpected moment of kindness.

I have come to appreciate that a person can have very little money and still experience an abundance of life's greatest riches.

And that realization has changed everything.

I no longer believe that I must accomplish something tomorrow in order to justify my existence today.

I do not have to become wealthy to be successful.

I do not have to become famous to be significant.

I do not have to change the entire world to make a meaningful difference in someone's world.

And neither do you.

Neither does anyone.

This is the great misunderstanding I hope to explore in the pages of this book.

From childhood, we are taught to do.

Do your homework.

Do well in school.

Get a good job.

Earn a good living.

Buy a house.

Build a career.

Make something of yourself.

And somewhere along the way, a terribly unfortunate idea takes root.

We begin to believe that what we do determines who we are.

We begin to confuse our occupations with our identities, our incomes with our importance, and our accomplishments with our worth.

We become so preoccupied with making something of ourselves that we sometimes forget the extraordinary miracle of simply being ourselves.

But imagine another way of living.

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning without feeling that you must prove your worth to anyone.

Imagine going to work, whatever that work might be, knowing that your dignity cannot be increased or diminished by the tasks you perform.

Imagine understanding that your job is something you do, not the definition of who you are.

Imagine recognizing that the person who cleans the floors, the person who stocks the shelves, the person who drives the bus, and the person who runs a multinational corporation are all equally deserving of dignity, friendship, respect, and love.

Imagine a world in which we asked children not only what they wanted to do when they grew up, but what kind of human beings they hoped to become.

Wouldn't that be extraordinary?

And wouldn't it change the world?

Scott, I hope you find work that is meaningful to you. I hope new professional opportunities emerge if that is what you want. I hope you discover relationships, friendships, adventures, and experiences that bring you tremendous happiness.

But more than anything, I hope you never postpone your happiness while waiting for those things to arrive.

Because life is happening now.

Not when you find a better job.

Not when your bank account reaches a particular number.

Not when someone falls in love with you.

Not when the world finally recognizes your talents.

Now.

This morning.

This afternoon.

This evening.

In the next conversation.

In the next act of kindness.

In the next moment when you recognize that, despite everything that has happened, there is still so much beauty available to you.

And there is another dimension to all of this.

We are not simply human beings.

We are human *becomings*.

Every day offers us opportunities to become more loving, more compassionate, more patient, more understanding, more generous, and more fully alive.

Not because we are inadequate as we are.

Not because we must constantly improve ourselves to earn our place in the world.

But because becoming is one of the great joys of being alive.

We can be enough today and still welcome the extraordinary possibilities of tomorrow.

We can accept ourselves completely while remaining open to growth.

We can be at peace with where we are without abandoning our dreams of where we might go.

And perhaps that is the greatest freedom of all.

To know that we are already worthy of love, happiness, friendship, and belonging — and that nothing we achieve or fail to achieve can take that worth away.

Scott, when I met you in Dollarama, I did not see a failed engineer.

I saw a man with a history, with experience, with intelligence, with disappointments, with hopes, and with a future that has yet to unfold.

I saw someone who had lived enough to have stories worth telling.

I saw someone who deserved to be heard.

And I saw someone whose life, simply by being shared with me for a few minutes, helped inspire the book you are now holding.

That is no small thing.

Perhaps neither of us will ever know what our conversation may ultimately set in motion.

But isn't that part of the wonder of being alive?

We never know when an ordinary encounter will become an extraordinary moment.

We never know when a stranger will become a friend.

We never know when a few words of encouragement will change someone's understanding of themselves.

And we never know when a man stocking shelves in a Dollarama store will help inspire a message that might reach people all over the world.

I want this book to be for you, Scott.

But I also want it to be for the millions of people who have ever felt that they have fallen behind.

For the person who lost a job.

For the person whose business failed.

For the person whose marriage ended.

For the person who never achieved the career they dreamed of.

For the person living on a modest income.

For the person who feels invisible in a world obsessed with wealth, achievement, status, and recognition.

For the person who looks at everyone else's life and wonders why their own has not turned out differently.

And for the person who has spent so many years trying to become somebody that they have forgotten the beautiful truth:

They already are somebody.

They always were.

They always will be.

This book is an invitation to rediscover that truth.

To release ourselves from the exhausting burden of constantly having to prove our worth.

To celebrate the extraordinary gift of an ordinary day.

To discover that the greatest riches in life cannot be purchased.

To recognize that love, kindness, peace, joy, friendship, wonder, and belonging are not consolation prizes for those who have failed to become wealthy.

They are among the very things that make life worth living.

And to understand that the ultimate measure of our lives may not be what we have accomplished, but what we have

experienced, what we have shared, how we have loved, and who we have become.

Scott, I don't know what tomorrow will bring for you.

I hope it brings wonderful things.

But I hope something even more important.

I hope that when tomorrow morning arrives, you will wake up knowing that you do not have to wait for your circumstances to change before you begin creating a life you love.

You are not your job.

You are not your income.

You are not your disappointments.

You are not your past.

You are a human being whose story is still being written.

And that story matters.

Thank you, Scott, for sharing a little of it with me.

Thank you for reminding me why this book needs to be written.

And thank you for being part of the beautiful, mysterious, ever-unfolding adventure we call life.

May you discover that the life you have is not merely a life to be endured while waiting for something better. It is a life to be lived, loved, celebrated, and continually transformed.

And may all of us come to understand that we do not need to do something extraordinary to be extraordinary.

Sometimes, the most extraordinary thing we can do is simply to be fully, joyfully, wonderfully ourselves.

With love and gratitude,

Ross Harvey

Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal

October 2026

*To Scott D., and to every person who has ever wondered
whether they are enough:*

You are.

And the beautiful adventure of becoming continues.

Introduction

The Life We Have Been Too Busy to Live

Somewhere along the way, we became very busy.

Busy making a living.

Busy building careers.

Busy paying bills.

Busy raising families.

Busy meeting expectations.

Busy trying to get ahead.

Busy preparing for a future in which, we promised ourselves, we would finally have the time and freedom to enjoy our lives.

And then something rather extraordinary happened.

We began to mistake all that busyness for living.

We came to believe that the purpose of life was to accomplish things. That our success could be measured by the size of our homes, the importance of our careers, the balance in our bank accounts, or the admiration of others.

We began to see life as an endless series of destinations.

Finish school.

Find a job.

Get promoted.

Buy a home.

Earn more money.

Become successful.

Retire.

And finally, if everything worked out as planned, enjoy ourselves.

But what if we have misunderstood something fundamental?

What if life was never intended to be a race toward some distant destination?

What if the extraordinary experience we have been working so hard to achieve has been available to us all along?

What if the purpose of life is not primarily to accomplish, acquire, or achieve?

What if the purpose of life is to live?

To experience the wonder of being alive.

To discover the beauty in ordinary moments.

To love and be loved.

To laugh.

To learn.

To grow.

To create.

To connect.

To become.

And to recognize that each day is not simply another opportunity to get things done, but another opportunity to experience the extraordinary gift of existence.

This is not a book about abandoning ambition.

It is not a book about refusing to work, ignoring responsibilities, or pretending that money does not matter.

Money matters. Work matters. Responsibilities matter.

But none of them should be confused with the value of the person who carries them.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to build a successful business, enjoy a rewarding career, or achieve something extraordinary.

There is something terribly unfortunate, however, about believing that we must accomplish these things before we are entitled to feel successful, fulfilled, or happy.

For many years, I pursued ambitious dreams.

I built businesses, participated in competitive sports, developed projects, and experienced the satisfaction of achievement.

Some things worked wonderfully.

Others did not.

And as my life unfolded, I began to understand something that changed my perspective completely.

The greatest moments of my life were not necessarily the moments when I accomplished the most.

They were often the moments when I was most fully alive.

A conversation.

A friendship.

A shared laugh.

A moment of tenderness.

An unexpected kindness.

A beautiful morning.

A wonderful meal with someone I love.

These experiences did not require extraordinary wealth or professional recognition.

They required something both simpler and, in many ways, more challenging.

They required me to be present.

Today, I find tremendous happiness in activities that might seem almost insignificant to someone else.

I greet people in my neighbourhood each morning.

I spend time with my wife.

I enjoy conversations with strangers.

I write.

I dream.

I explore ideas about how we might create a kinder, more loving world.

And I try to ensure that the people I encounter leave our time together feeling a little better than they did before.

Not every day is perfect.

Not every experience is pleasant.

But I have discovered that a beautiful life does not require perfect circumstances.

It requires an appreciation of what is possible within the circumstances we have.

And perhaps most importantly, it requires a willingness to stop postponing our lives.

We do not need to wait until we become wealthy.

We do not need to wait until we retire.

We do not need to wait until someone recognizes our greatness.

We do not need to wait until everything falls into place.

We can begin now.

Right where we are.

With the people around us.

With the resources available to us.

With the opportunities this very day provides.

Because the most important question is not necessarily what we will accomplish tomorrow.

It is how we will experience being alive today.

Welcome to *The Art of Being*.

Welcome to the beautiful adventure of becoming.

And welcome to the extraordinary possibility that the life you have been searching for may already be waiting for you to embrace it.

Chapter One

You Were Somebody Before You Did Anything

Think about a newborn baby.

The child has accomplished absolutely nothing.

No education.

No career.

No income.

No achievements.

No reputation.

No possessions.

The child has not contributed to the economy, built a business, written a book, or won a championship.

And yet, when a parent holds that child for the first time, something extraordinary happens.

The child is loved.

Not because of what the child has done.

Not because of what the child might someday accomplish.

Not because the child has earned that love through effort or achievement.

The child is loved simply because the child exists.

And in that beautiful moment, we are reminded of something that many of us spend the rest of our lives forgetting.

We do not have to earn our fundamental worth as human beings.

We arrive with it.

We carry it throughout our lives.

And no disappointment, failure, loss, or change in circumstance can take it away.

Yet almost from the moment we begin to understand the world, we are introduced to a different message.

We are praised for doing well.

For getting good grades.

For winning competitions.

For behaving properly.

For achieving things.

And while encouragement and recognition can be wonderful, we may gradually begin to associate approval with accomplishment.

We learn that doing well makes other people happy.

And eventually, without quite realizing it, we may begin to believe that doing well is what makes us valuable.

This belief can follow us into adulthood.

We introduce ourselves by our occupations.

"I'm a lawyer."

"I'm an engineer."

"I'm a teacher."

"I'm a business owner."

"I'm a doctor."

Rarely do we introduce ourselves by saying:

"I'm someone who loves to laugh."

"I'm someone who enjoys helping people."

"I'm someone who finds tremendous pleasure in music."

"I'm someone who loves my family."

"I'm someone who is learning to appreciate the extraordinary beauty of ordinary life."

And yet, which descriptions tell us more about the human being?

Our occupations tell people something about how we spend our working hours.

Our interests, values, relationships, and character tell them something about who we are.

There is an enormous difference.

The Danger of Becoming Our Job

Imagine someone who has spent thirty years building a successful career.

They are respected.

They are well paid.

They are proud of what they have accomplished.

Their work has become an important part of their identity.

And then, one day, the job disappears.

Perhaps the company closes.

Perhaps the economy changes.

Perhaps technology makes their position unnecessary.

Perhaps illness or family circumstances prevent them from continuing.

Suddenly, the person who once felt important begins to feel diminished.

They may ask themselves:

Who am I now?

What am I worth?

What do I have to offer?

But consider what has actually changed.

Their employment has changed.

Their income may have changed.

Their daily routine has changed.

Their circumstances may have become much more difficult.

But their fundamental worth as a human being has not changed at all.

They still possess their experiences, their memories, their capacity for friendship, their ability to learn, their potential to love, and their opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

They are still somebody.

They always were.

The tragedy is not that a job was lost.

The tragedy is that the person may have come to believe that losing the job meant losing themselves.

The Difference Between Worth and Achievement

I want to make an important distinction.

Achievement is wonderful.

There is something deeply satisfying about working hard, developing a skill, accomplishing a goal, or creating something meaningful.

I know that pleasure.

I have experienced it in sports, business, writing, and many other endeavours.

And I continue to enjoy it.

But achievement and worth are two entirely different things.

Achievement is something we do.

Worth is something we possess simply by being human.

We can increase our knowledge.

We can improve our skills.

We can become more capable.

We can develop greater wisdom and understanding.

We can accomplish extraordinary things.

But none of these accomplishments makes us more deserving of basic human dignity than someone who has accomplished very little.

The world may reward people differently.

It may celebrate one person and overlook another.

It may pay one individual millions of dollars and another barely enough to survive.

But the world's systems of recognition and compensation are not reliable measures of human worth.

And we should never allow them to become our own.

What If We Taught Children Something Different?

Imagine a world in which children grew up understanding that they were already valuable.

Imagine encouraging them to develop their talents, pursue their interests, and accomplish wonderful things — while ensuring that they never confused their achievements with their worth.

Imagine teaching them that kindness matters as much as competition.

That compassion matters as much as ambition.

That friendship matters as much as financial success.

That becoming a loving, thoughtful, joyful human being is itself a magnificent accomplishment.

We would still have scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, artists, teachers, athletes, and inventors.

We would still have people pursuing extraordinary dreams.

But perhaps we would have fewer people living with the terrible fear that they were not enough.

Perhaps we would have fewer people measuring their lives against the lives of others.

Perhaps we would have more people pursuing their dreams because those dreams brought them joy, rather than because they needed to prove their importance.

And perhaps we would begin to create a world in which success was measured not only by what people accomplished, but by the quality of the lives they lived and the love they brought into the world.

You Are Already Somebody

I want you to consider something.

Before you earned your first dollar, you were somebody.

Before you received your first award, you were somebody.

Before you graduated, found a job, bought a home, or accomplished anything that the world might regard as significant, you were somebody.

And if tomorrow you lost every possession, every title, and every external symbol of success, you would still be somebody.

Your circumstances might be difficult.

Your future might be uncertain.

You might need help.

But you would remain a human being worthy of dignity, respect, friendship, and love.

And that is where I believe a truly beautiful life begins.

Not with the frantic pursuit of becoming important.

But with the quiet recognition that we already are.

You were somebody before you did anything.

You are somebody right now.

And you will remain somebody regardless of what tomorrow brings.

The adventure ahead is not about earning the right to matter.

It is about discovering what you might become when you finally understand that you already do.

Chapter Two

The Great Illusion of Success

What does it mean to be successful?

It seems like such a simple question.

And yet, I suspect that if we asked a thousand people, we might receive a thousand different answers.

Some would speak of wealth.

Others would speak of careers, accomplishments, recognition, or influence.

Some would describe a happy marriage, healthy children, meaningful friendships, or the freedom to live as they choose.

And some might simply say:

"I want to be happy."

But there is something curious about the way our society approaches success.

We tend to celebrate the things that can be counted.

Money.

Awards.

Promotions.

Sales.

Followers.

Possessions.

We are much less skilled at recognizing the things that make life beautiful but cannot easily be measured.

The comfort of a friendship.

The warmth of an embrace.

The joy of being understood.

The peace of a quiet morning.

The satisfaction of helping someone.

The delight of laughter shared with a person we love.

And yet, if we were to lose these things, how much would all our measurable achievements really mean?

The Man Who Had Everything

Imagine a man who has spent forty years building a business.

He has worked long hours.

He has made sacrifices.

He has missed family dinners, postponed vacations, and spent countless evenings worrying about decisions that might affect his company.

And he has succeeded.

He has a beautiful home, several cars, substantial investments, and the admiration of his colleagues.

One evening, he sits alone in his magnificent living room.

Everything he once dreamed of owning is now his.

And yet he feels strangely empty.

He has spent his life preparing to be happy.

But he has never really learned how to enjoy being alive.

Now imagine another man.

He has a modest apartment.

He works at a job that pays enough to cover his basic needs, although money is sometimes tight.

He has a few close friends.

He enjoys his morning coffee.

He takes pleasure in walking through his neighbourhood.

He knows the names of the people who work in the local shops.

He laughs easily.

He loves deeply.

He finds meaning in ordinary experiences.

And most evenings, he goes to bed feeling grateful for another day.

Which man is more successful?

Perhaps both are.

Perhaps neither is.

We cannot know the full quality of another person's life from the outside.

But we can recognize something important.

The outward appearance of success tells us remarkably little about the inward experience of living.

A large bank account does not guarantee happiness.

A modest income does not prevent it.

A prestigious career does not guarantee fulfillment.

An ordinary job does not make fulfillment impossible.

The true measure of a life must include something more than its outward accomplishments.

It must include the experience of the person living it.

The Moving Finish Line

One of the great difficulties with achievement-based success is that the finish line keeps moving.

When we are young, we may believe that earning a certain salary will make us happy.

We reach that salary.

And then we imagine that earning a little more will finally provide the satisfaction we seek.

We purchase a home.

And soon we begin thinking about a larger home.

We receive a promotion.

And before long, we begin looking toward the next one.

We accomplish something wonderful.

And almost immediately, we begin wondering what we should accomplish next.

There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting more.

Growth and ambition can be exciting.

But when our happiness is always waiting at the next destination, we may spend our entire lives travelling without ever arriving.

We become so focused on what is missing that we overlook what is present.

And the present, of course, is the only place where life is actually being experienced.

A Different Definition

I would like to suggest another way of thinking about success.

What if success were not primarily a destination?

What if it were a way of living?

What if we considered ourselves successful when we were living in a manner consistent with our deepest values?

When we loved the people around us.

When we treated others with kindness.

When we found meaning in our activities.

When we made room for joy.

When we remained curious.

When we appreciated the beauty available to us.

When we continued becoming the people we wanted to be.

Under this definition, success would no longer belong exclusively to those who accumulated the greatest wealth or achieved the highest status.

It would be available to everyone.

Not equally easily, because circumstances and opportunities differ enormously.

But available as a possibility to be cultivated in countless different ways.

And perhaps that is the most liberating idea of all.

We do not have to wait for the world to declare us successful.

We can begin living successfully according to our own deepest values.

Today.

The Beautiful Possibility

I have come to believe that one of the greatest freedoms in life is the freedom to define success for ourselves.

To stop allowing society to tell us what should make us happy.

To stop comparing our journeys with those of others.

To stop assuming that a more expensive life is necessarily a better life.

And to begin asking a different question.

Not simply:

"How can I become more successful?"

But:

"How can I make the life I am living more beautiful?"

That question changes everything.

It invites us to look at our relationships.

Our attitudes.

Our daily experiences.

Our opportunities to contribute.

Our capacity for gratitude.

Our willingness to enjoy the extraordinary gift of an ordinary day.

And it reminds us that while achievement can enrich our lives, it was never intended to become the measure of our humanity.

We can pursue great dreams without making our happiness dependent upon achieving them.

We can work hard without forgetting to live.

We can welcome prosperity without confusing it with personal worth.

And we can recognize that a life filled with love, kindness, friendship, meaning, and joy is a successful life by any measure that truly matters.

Success is not simply what you have to show for your life.

It is also how you experience the life you have.

Chapter Three

The Extraordinary Gift of an Ordinary Day

There is something quite wonderful about an ordinary day.

No great achievements.

No extraordinary events.

No dramatic announcements.

Just another day.

And yet, I have come to believe that some of life's greatest treasures are hidden within these seemingly unremarkable moments.

Every weekday morning, I spend time outside a grocery store in my Montreal neighbourhood of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

I call it my office.

There is no desk, no computer, no telephone, and no business to conduct.

There are simply two benches and a steady procession of people beginning their days.

Some are going to work.

Some are walking their dogs.

Some are waiting for the school bus.

Others are simply passing by.

And I greet them.

"Good morning!"

"Have a wonderful day!"

Sometimes we exchange only a smile.

Sometimes we talk for several minutes.

Over time, strangers have become familiar faces, and familiar faces have become friends.

I have learned their names, discovered little pieces of their lives, and shared in their happiness, concerns, and everyday experiences.

Nothing particularly remarkable is happening.

And yet, something remarkable is happening.

We are connecting.

We are acknowledging one another.

We are reminding each other, in the simplest possible way, that we matter.

I cannot tell you how much money these mornings have earned me.

They have earned me nothing.

I cannot point to some great accomplishment resulting from them.

But I can tell you that they have enriched my life enormously.

And I hope they have enriched the lives of others.

The Beauty We Overlook

We have become accustomed to believing that extraordinary happiness requires extraordinary circumstances.

A wonderful vacation.

A major accomplishment.

An expensive purchase.

A special celebration.

And these experiences can certainly bring tremendous pleasure.

But what about the other days?

What about the hundreds of ordinary days between life's major events?

Are they simply time to be endured while we wait for something exciting to happen?

Or might they contain opportunities for happiness that we have barely begun to appreciate?

A warm cup of tea.

A favourite song.

A beautiful sunset.

A conversation with someone we love.

A shared laugh.

A kindness offered without expectation.

These are not insignificant experiences.

They are the substance of a life.

And when we learn to appreciate them, something wonderful happens.

We discover that we do not need to wait for extraordinary events to experience extraordinary happiness.

Today Is Not a Rehearsal

There is a tendency to treat today as preparation for tomorrow.

We work today so we can enjoy ourselves later.

We save today so we can live comfortably in the future.

We sacrifice today in pursuit of something we hope will make tomorrow better.

Sometimes these choices are necessary and wise.

But we must be careful not to sacrifice the experience of living itself.

Tomorrow is important.

But today is the life we have been given to experience right now.

And I would hate to reach the end of my journey only to discover that I had spent most of it preparing to begin.

So I have a suggestion.

When you wake up tomorrow, don't begin by asking what you must accomplish.

Begin by asking:

"What might make this a beautiful day?"

And then look for opportunities to make it so.

You may discover that the extraordinary life you have been seeking has been hiding in your ordinary days all along.

Chapter Four

The Freedom of Having Nothing to Prove

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning with absolutely nothing to prove.

You don't have to impress anyone.

You don't have to justify your existence.

You don't have to demonstrate that you are successful, important, intelligent, attractive, or accomplished.

You are simply free to be yourself.

What a remarkable feeling that would be!

And yet, how many of us actually experience it?

We spend enormous amounts of energy worrying about how others perceive us.

Are we successful enough?

Are we earning enough?

Have we accomplished enough?

Do other people admire us?

Are we keeping up?

And perhaps the most exhausting question of all:

Are we good enough?

I would like to suggest that we have been asking the wrong question.

Our worth is not something that must be continually established through performance.

It is not a prize awarded to those who accomplish the most.

It is an essential part of our humanity.

The Invisible Audience

Much of our anxiety comes from living as though an invisible audience were constantly evaluating us.

We imagine what our neighbours think.

What our former classmates think.

What our colleagues think.

What our families think.

And we adjust our lives accordingly.

We purchase things we don't particularly need.

We pursue achievements that don't necessarily bring us happiness.

We hesitate to admit our disappointments.

We sometimes pretend to be more successful than we feel.

All because we fear that others might judge us.

But consider this.

What if we stopped performing?

What if we allowed ourselves to be imperfect?

What if we acknowledged that our lives have included successes and failures, wise decisions and mistakes, wonderful experiences and painful disappointments?

What if we recognized that this is not evidence of inadequacy?

It is evidence of being human.

Living Without an Audience

There is a beautiful freedom in doing something simply because you enjoy it.

Playing music without needing to become a professional musician.

Painting without needing to sell your paintings.

Writing without needing to become famous.

Walking without counting your steps.

Helping someone without expecting recognition.

Enjoying a meal without photographing it.

Loving someone without needing the world to know.

These experiences belong to us.

They do not need to be justified by an outcome.

They do not need to become achievements.

They can simply be enjoyed.

And perhaps this is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves.

Permission to live without constantly evaluating our performance.

You Have Nothing to Prove

This does not mean abandoning responsibility or refusing to grow.

It means understanding that our growth is not a condition of our worth.

We can strive to become wiser without believing we are foolish.

We can work toward greater prosperity without believing we are failures.

We can improve our relationships without believing we are unworthy of love.

We can pursue extraordinary dreams without making our happiness dependent upon achieving them.

And we can accept ourselves today while remaining excited about who we might become tomorrow.

So here is an invitation.

For just one day, try living without an audience.

Do what matters to you.

Enjoy what brings you joy.

Treat others with kindness.

Allow yourself to be imperfect.

And when the day is over, resist the temptation to evaluate your worth according to what you accomplished.

Instead, ask yourself whether you enjoyed being alive.

You do not have to prove that you deserve a place in this world.

You already belong here.

Chapter Five

The Beautiful Art of Enough

There is a word that has the power to transform our lives.

Enough.

It is such a small word.

And yet, it can bring an extraordinary sense of freedom.

Enough money.

Enough possessions.

Enough accomplishments.

Enough recognition.

Enough striving.

Not because we have lost our enthusiasm for life.

But because we have discovered that happiness does not always require more.

We live in a world that constantly encourages us to want something else.

A larger home.

A newer car.

A better job.

More money.

Greater recognition.

And sometimes these things genuinely improve our circumstances.

There is nothing wrong with wanting them.

But there is a danger in believing that our happiness must always remain just beyond our reach.

The Endless Pursuit of More

Imagine someone who dreams of earning fifty thousand dollars a year.

They believe that once they reach that income, life will be wonderful.

Eventually, they succeed.

For a while, they feel tremendous satisfaction.

But soon they begin imagining how much better life would be if they earned seventy-five thousand.

And then one hundred thousand.

And then perhaps two hundred thousand.

The numbers change.

But the underlying belief remains the same.

Happiness is waiting somewhere ahead.

And the present is never quite enough.

This is not a criticism of ambition.

It is an invitation to separate ambition from contentment.

We can welcome more without needing more to justify our happiness.

We can pursue dreams while appreciating what we already possess.

We can improve our circumstances without treating our present lives as inadequate.

Enough Is Not Giving Up

Some people may interpret contentment as resignation.

If I am satisfied with my life, why would I strive to improve it?

But I see no contradiction between being content and continuing to grow.

I love my life.

And I continue to dream about making it even more beautiful.

I want to become more loving.

More compassionate.

More understanding.

More helpful.

I want to experience new things, develop new friendships, and contribute to a kinder world.

But I do not need to dislike my life today in order to welcome an even more wonderful tomorrow.

That is the distinction.

Contentment is not the absence of possibility. It is the presence of appreciation.

The Richness of a Simple Life

Some of my happiest experiences cost very little.

Sharing breakfast with Christy.

Enjoying music together.

Watching a favourite television program.

Taking a walk.

Talking with neighbours.

Sitting down to a wonderful meal.

Laughing at something completely ridiculous.

These experiences do not require wealth.

They require time, attention, and the willingness to enjoy them.

Of course, money can provide comfort, security, and opportunities.

And the absence of sufficient money can create genuine hardship.

We should never romanticize poverty or pretend that material needs are unimportant.

But neither should we assume that a person's capacity for joy increases automatically with their income.

There are many forms of richness.

And some of the most valuable cannot be purchased.

The Gift of Enough

Perhaps the greatest freedom is the ability to look at our lives and say:

"I welcome wonderful things tomorrow, but I do not need to wait for them to appreciate today."

I have enough to begin.

Enough to love.

Enough to learn.

Enough to connect.

Enough to contribute something meaningful.

Enough to experience at least some of the beauty available in this moment.

And perhaps, most importantly:

I am enough.

Not finished.

Not perfect in every action.

Not beyond the possibility of growth.

But enough to deserve love, dignity, happiness, and belonging.

Today.

Exactly as I am.

Chapter Six

Who Are You Becoming?

There is a question I find far more interesting than asking someone what they do for a living.

Who are you becoming?

Not what are you accomplishing.

Not how much are you earning.

Not what position do you hold.

But who are you becoming as you journey through life?

Are you becoming more loving?

More patient?

More generous?

More curious?

More understanding?

Are you learning to appreciate the people around you?

Are you discovering new reasons to be grateful?

Are you becoming more comfortable with yourself?

These questions take us beyond the outward circumstances of our lives and invite us to consider the human beings we are gradually becoming.

We Are Always Becoming

None of us is a finished creation.

Our experiences continue to shape us.

Our relationships influence us.

Our challenges teach us.

Our choices affect the people we become.

And this process continues throughout our lives.

At sixty-six, I find myself fascinated by the possibilities that still lie ahead.

Not simply the things I might accomplish.

But the person I might become.

I want to become someone who listens more attentively.

Someone who understands others more deeply.

Someone who responds to difficulties with greater patience.

Someone who finds more opportunities to express kindness.

Someone who continues discovering the beauty of being alive.

And I find that prospect tremendously exciting.

Growth Without Self-Rejection

There is something important about the way we approach personal growth.

Too often, self-improvement begins with dissatisfaction.

We identify everything we dislike about ourselves.

We create lists of shortcomings.

We establish goals designed to correct our inadequacies.

And we imagine that happiness will arrive when we have finally become the person we think we should be.

But what if we approached growth differently?

What if we began with appreciation rather than criticism?

What if we recognized the goodness already within us and looked for opportunities to express it more fully?

A flower does not need to despise itself as a bud in order to blossom.

A child does not need to be ashamed of being young in order to grow.

And we do not need to reject who we are today in order to welcome who we might become tomorrow.

Growth can be an expression of love rather than dissatisfaction.

Becoming Through Everyday Living

The beautiful thing about becoming is that it does not require extraordinary circumstances.

We become more patient when we choose patience during a difficult conversation.

We become more generous when we share something with another person.

We become more compassionate when we take the time to understand someone's pain.

We become more loving when we express love.

We become more courageous when we act despite our fears.

These opportunities appear throughout ordinary life.

At home.

At work.

In the grocery store.

On the sidewalk.

In our relationships.

And in the quiet moments when no one else is watching.

We do not have to wait for a great event to become a different kind of person.

We can begin with the next interaction.

The next decision.

The next opportunity to express the qualities we value.

The Never-Ending Adventure

I love the thought that life is a continuous adventure of becoming.

There is no final destination at which we must declare ourselves complete.

There is no age at which curiosity must end.

There is no point at which we have exhausted our capacity to love, learn, appreciate, or grow.

Every day offers new possibilities.

And perhaps the most beautiful realization is that we can enjoy the journey without becoming obsessed with the destination.

We can celebrate who we are.

We can welcome who we are becoming.

And we can understand that both are worthy of appreciation.

You are not a project that must be completed before your life can begin.

You are a human being whose life is unfolding right now.

And what a wonderful adventure that can be.

Chapter Seven

The Extraordinary Power of Being There

Sometimes the greatest gift we can give another human being is simply our presence.

Not our advice.

Not our money.

Not our expertise.

Not our ability to solve their problems.

Just ourselves.

Our time.

Our attention.

Our willingness to listen.

I have discovered something quite wonderful during my mornings greeting people in my neighbourhood.

Most people are not looking for anything extraordinary.

They simply appreciate being acknowledged.

A smile.

A friendly greeting.

Someone remembering their name.

Someone asking how their day is going — and actually being interested in the answer.

These seemingly insignificant gestures can make an enormous difference.

The Gift of Being Seen

Think about how many people move through their days feeling invisible.

The person working behind the counter.

The elderly neighbour living alone.

The individual cleaning an office building.

The bus driver.

The person sitting quietly in a waiting room.

We pass hundreds of people without ever really seeing them.

And yet, every one of them has a story.

Every one has experienced happiness and disappointment.

Every one has dreams, memories, concerns, and hopes.

Every one is living a life as rich and complicated as our own.

What might happen if we began treating people with that understanding?

If we looked into their eyes?

If we smiled?

If we took a moment to acknowledge their existence?

We might discover that the world becomes a much friendlier place.

You Don't Have to Fix Everything

When someone shares a difficulty, our natural instinct is often to offer a solution.

We want to help.

We want to make things better.

And sometimes practical assistance is exactly what is needed.

But there are moments when another person does not need us to fix anything.

They need us to listen.

They need to feel understood.

They need to know that someone cares.

I think this is one of the most important lessons we can learn about relationships.

We do not always have to do something for another person.

Sometimes we simply have to be there.

A World of Small Connections

Imagine a neighbourhood where people greeted one another warmly.

Where strangers gradually became acquaintances.

Where acquaintances became friends.

Where people noticed when someone was missing.

Where kindness was not considered an extraordinary event, but an ordinary part of daily living.

I believe such communities are possible.

And they do not necessarily require enormous investments, complicated programs, or elaborate organizations.

They begin with people.

People who are willing to acknowledge one another.

People who are willing to care.

People who recognize that a few minutes of genuine attention may be more valuable than many expensive gifts.

And the wonderful thing is that the giver often receives as much as the recipient.

When I greet someone and see their face light up, my own day becomes brighter.

When I listen to someone's story, my understanding of life becomes richer.

When I make a new friend, my world becomes larger.

This is not sacrifice.

It is one of the great pleasures of being alive.

Never underestimate the extraordinary power of making another human being feel that they matter.

Sometimes the greatest thing you can do is simply be there.

Chapter Eight

Love Is Not an Achievement

We live in a world that encourages us to accomplish things.

And sometimes, without realizing it, we begin treating our relationships in much the same way.

We want the perfect marriage.

The perfect family.

The perfect friendship.

The perfect romantic relationship.

We imagine that if we work hard enough, make the right decisions, and follow the right formula, we will achieve the happiness we desire.

But love is not a trophy.

It is not a destination.

And it is certainly not a performance.

Love is something we experience, express, and share.

The Beauty of Everyday Love

One of the greatest joys of my life is my relationship with my wife, Christy.

Our happiness is not dependent upon extraordinary adventures or expensive experiences.

Some of our most wonderful moments happen at home.

We share meals.

We laugh.

We listen to music.

We watch television together.

We enjoy little rituals that might mean absolutely nothing to anyone else.

And sometimes we simply enjoy being in one another's company.

There is something deeply comforting about that.

We do not have to entertain each other constantly.

We do not have to accomplish something together every day.

We do not have to turn every moment into a special occasion.

We can simply enjoy being together.

Of course, relationships also involve difficulties.

There are disagreements, disappointments, misunderstandings, and challenges.

Love does not eliminate these experiences.

But it can provide a foundation from which we approach them with patience, understanding, and kindness.

Being Loved Without Performing

One of the most beautiful experiences in life is being loved without feeling that we must continually earn that love.

To know that someone cares about us when we are tired.

When we are discouraged.

When we have made a mistake.

When we have nothing particularly interesting to say.

When we are simply ourselves.

This kind of love provides an extraordinary sense of freedom.

We can stop performing.

We can stop pretending.

We can allow ourselves to be human.

And we can offer that same freedom to the people we love.

We can appreciate them not only for what they do for us, but for who they are.

Love as a Way of Being

I believe love extends far beyond romantic relationships.

It can be expressed in friendship.

In family life.

In community.

In the way we treat strangers.

In our willingness to forgive.

In our concern for people who may never be able to repay us.

Love is not merely something we feel.

It is also a quality we can bring to the way we live.

We can become more loving through the smallest of actions.

A thoughtful word.

A patient response.

A moment of understanding.

A willingness to listen.

A simple act of generosity.

And perhaps that is one of the most extraordinary aspects of love.

We do not have to wait for a special occasion to express it.

We can begin with the very next person we encounter.

The greatest love stories are not necessarily filled with extraordinary events.

Sometimes they are made of thousands of ordinary moments in which two people continue choosing to care for one another.

Chapter Nine

The Forgotten Art of Playing

When did life become so serious?

As children, we played.

We laughed.

We imagined.

We explored.

We invented games.

We found excitement in the simplest things.

A cardboard box could become a spaceship.

A stick could become a sword.

A puddle could become an ocean.

We did not need to justify these activities.

We did not ask whether they were productive.

We did not worry about whether they would improve our résumés.

We played because playing was wonderful.

And then we grew up.

When Everything Became Productive

Somewhere along the way, we began dividing our activities into useful and useless.

Work was useful.

Education was useful.

Exercise was useful.

Household responsibilities were useful.

But playing?

Playing became something we did when everything important was finished.

And since there was always something important waiting to be done, play gradually disappeared from many of our lives.

What a loss!

I have spent much of my life involved in sports, and I know the extraordinary pleasure of competition, movement, and developing a skill.

But I also know that some of the greatest enjoyment comes from playing simply for the pleasure of playing.

A game of cards.

A friendly competition.

A little backgammon.

A game of chess.

A walk taken without a destination.

An evening of music.

A ridiculous joke.

A spontaneous dance in the living room.

These experiences do not have to accomplish anything.

Their value lies in the enjoyment they provide.

The Freedom to Be Silly

I think one of the great privileges of growing older is discovering that we no longer need to take ourselves quite so seriously.

We can laugh at our mistakes.

We can enjoy being ridiculous.

We can try something new without worrying about whether we will be good at it.

We can sing badly.

Dance awkwardly.

Lose a game.

Tell a terrible joke.

And enjoy every minute.

There is something wonderfully liberating about allowing ourselves to be playful.

It reminds us that life is not merely a series of responsibilities.

It is also an extraordinary opportunity for enjoyment.

Play Is Not Wasted Time

Imagine looking back at your life and remembering an evening spent laughing with someone you love.

Would you consider that time wasted?

Of course not.

And yet, how often do we sacrifice such moments because we believe we should be doing something more productive?

Perhaps we need to reconsider what productivity actually means.

If an activity brings us joy, strengthens a relationship, refreshes our spirit, or simply makes being alive more enjoyable, hasn't it accomplished something valuable?

Not everything worthwhile can be measured in dollars or achievements.

Some things are worthwhile simply because they make life beautiful.

Make Room for Joy

I would like to suggest something.

Do not wait until retirement to rediscover play.

Do not wait until all your responsibilities have disappeared.

Do not wait until you have earned the right to enjoy yourself.

Make room for it now.

Play a game.

Listen to music.

Dance with someone you love.

Laugh at something silly.

Try something simply because it looks enjoyable.

And remember that you do not have to be good at something to have a wonderful time doing it.

We were not born merely to work, accomplish, and accumulate.

We were also born with an extraordinary capacity for wonder, imagination, laughter, and joy.

Let's not forget to use it.

Chapter Ten

Your Work Is Not Your Worth

There is dignity in honest work.

Whether someone is performing surgery, designing a bridge, teaching children, preparing meals, cleaning floors, or stocking shelves, their contribution can be meaningful.

Work provides more than income.

It can offer structure, purpose, relationships, opportunities to learn, and the satisfaction of contributing something useful.

But there is a distinction we must never forget.

The value of the work someone performs is not the measure of the value of the person performing it.

This distinction lies at the heart of everything I hope to share in this book.

When Circumstances Change

Consider someone who has enjoyed a long and successful professional career.

They have developed expertise.

They have earned respect.

They have contributed to important projects.

And then circumstances change.

Perhaps their industry contracts.

Perhaps their company closes.

Perhaps their personal life takes an unexpected turn.

And they find themselves working in a position that pays considerably less and carries far less prestige.

The world may regard this as a step backward.

But is the person any less intelligent?

Any less deserving of respect?

Any less capable of friendship, love, kindness, and happiness?

Of course not.

Their circumstances have changed.

Their humanity has not.

Bringing Ourselves to Our Work

I believe there is another way to approach employment.

Instead of asking our jobs to define us, we can bring our character to whatever work we happen to be doing.

A person working in a store can be kind.

A person cleaning a building can take pride in helping create a pleasant environment.

A person serving meals can brighten someone's day.

A person driving a bus can make passengers feel welcome.

These qualities are not determined by salary.

They are expressions of the person.

And they can transform the experience of work.

This does not mean that people should accept unfair treatment, inadequate wages, or unsafe conditions.

Everyone deserves dignity, reasonable opportunities, and fair treatment.

Nor does it mean that someone should abandon the search for more satisfying employment.

It simply means that while we pursue better circumstances, we need not surrender our sense of worth.

A Life Beyond the Workplace

One of the unfortunate consequences of defining ourselves through employment is that we may neglect the other dimensions of our lives.

We become so focused on our careers that we forget our friendships.

We work so hard to provide for our families that we have little time to enjoy them.

We postpone hobbies.

We neglect our health.

We abandon interests that once brought us happiness.

And sometimes we arrive at retirement wondering who we are without our jobs.

But we were never only our jobs.

We are friends.

Partners.

Parents.

Neighbours.

Artists.

Dreamers.

Learners.

Members of communities.

Human beings with interests, values, and possibilities extending far beyond the workplace.

And these dimensions deserve our attention throughout our lives.

The Freedom to Work Without Being Defined by Work

I would love to see a world in which people could pursue their careers enthusiastically without allowing those careers to determine their identities.

A world in which professional success was celebrated without being confused with personal superiority.

A world in which those performing modestly paid work were treated with the same fundamental respect as those occupying prestigious positions.

A world in which losing a job did not mean losing one's sense of self.

And a world in which people understood that the purpose of earning a living was, at least in part, to support the experience of living.

Work can be wonderful.

Achievement can be satisfying.

Ambition can be inspiring.

But life is larger than any occupation.

And we are larger than any title.

You may change jobs many times during your life.

You may experience success, disappointment, prosperity, and hardship.

But through it all, you remain a human being whose worth was never dependent upon the work you performed.

Your work is something you do.

Your life is something you live.

And who you are is so much more than either your job title or your paycheck.

Chapter Eleven

Money Is a Tool, Not a Measure

Money is a remarkable invention.

It allows us to exchange goods and services, provide for our families, enjoy comforts, and pursue opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable.

It can make life easier.

It can provide security.

It can create freedom.

But somewhere along the way, we began allowing money to do something it was never qualified to do.

We allowed it to measure the value of human beings.

We began associating wealth with success, importance, intelligence, and even virtue.

And we began treating those with little money as though they had somehow fallen short.

What a strange way to evaluate a human life.

The Difference Between Wealth and Worth

I have experienced periods of professional and financial success.

I have also experienced many years of living with very limited financial resources.

And these experiences have taught me something important.

My bank account has changed.

My circumstances have changed.

My opportunities have changed.

But my fundamental worth as a human being has not changed at all.

Nor has my capacity to love.

To laugh.

To learn.

To create.

To enjoy friendship.

To appreciate beauty.

To contribute something meaningful to the lives of others.

Money can influence the circumstances in which we live.

But it cannot determine the quality of the human being living within those circumstances.

The Things Money Cannot Buy

Money can purchase a beautiful house.

But it cannot guarantee a loving home.

It can purchase an expensive meal.

But it cannot guarantee the pleasure of sharing that meal with someone we love.

It can purchase entertainment.

But it cannot guarantee joy.

It can purchase the services of others.

But it cannot purchase genuine friendship.

And it can provide opportunities for extraordinary experiences without guaranteeing that we will appreciate them.

This is not an argument against wealth.

I would welcome a world in which everyone had sufficient resources to live comfortably and securely.

But I would also welcome a world in which people understood that the greatest riches of life are not necessarily financial.

A Different Kind of Prosperity

Imagine defining prosperity by the richness of our daily experience.

The quality of our relationships.

The freedom to enjoy our time.

The satisfaction of meaningful activity.

The peace of knowing that we are loved.

The pleasure of contributing to our communities.

The joy of waking up and looking forward to another day.

Under this definition, financial resources remain important.

But they are no longer the ultimate measure of success.

They become one of many tools that can help us create a beautiful life.

And perhaps that is where money belongs.

Not on a pedestal.

Not as the measure of our worth.

But in service to the things that truly matter.

Money can help us live.

But it should never be allowed to tell us what our lives are worth.

Chapter Twelve

It Is Never Too Late to Begin Again

Life rarely unfolds exactly as we imagine.

Relationships end.

Careers change.

Businesses fail.

Health challenges arise.

Dreams take unexpected turns.

And sometimes we find ourselves standing in circumstances we never anticipated, wondering how we arrived there.

It can be tempting to look backward.

To regret decisions.

To mourn opportunities.

To imagine how different life might have been.

And sometimes we need time to grieve what has been lost.

But eventually, another possibility presents itself.

We can begin again.

Beginning Again Does Not Mean Starting Over

There is something important to understand about new beginnings.

We never truly start from nothing.

We carry our experiences with us.

Our knowledge.

Our memories.

Our relationships.

Our lessons.

Our understanding of ourselves and the world.

Even painful experiences can deepen our compassion and wisdom.

A person beginning a new career at sixty does not arrive with the same understanding of life they possessed at twenty.

Someone entering a new relationship after heartbreak brings a lifetime of experience.

Someone rebuilding after financial difficulty may have developed insights that prosperity alone could never have provided.

We are not beginning from the beginning.

We are beginning from where we are.

And that can be a very powerful place to start.

The Courage to Release the Old Story

Sometimes the greatest obstacle to a new beginning is the story we continue telling ourselves.

"I used to be successful."

"I should have accomplished more."

"My best years are behind me."

"It's too late."

"I have failed."

These thoughts can become prisons.

They keep us attached to an identity that no longer reflects the possibilities before us.

But what if we changed the story?

What if instead of saying, "My life didn't work out," we said, "My life is still unfolding"?

What if we recognized that the future does not have to resemble the past?

What if we stopped measuring tomorrow by yesterday's disappointments?

And what if we allowed ourselves to become excited about possibilities we have not yet imagined?

The Beauty of This Moment

I am sixty-six years old.

And I do not feel that my life is winding down.

I feel that it is continuing to open.

There are people I have not yet met.

Friendships I have not yet developed.

Ideas I have not yet explored.

Experiences I have not yet enjoyed.

And opportunities to express love and kindness that have not yet presented themselves.

How could I possibly regard my adventure as finished?

I have no need to recreate the life I lived thirty years ago.

I want to experience the life available to me now.

And I want to continue welcoming the extraordinary possibilities of becoming.

Your Next Chapter

Perhaps you are facing a major transition.

Perhaps something you valued has ended.

Perhaps you are disappointed by the direction your life has taken.

You do not have to pretend that these experiences are easy.

You do not have to celebrate your losses.

You do not have to know exactly what comes next.

But you can remember this.

Your story is not finished.

There are still opportunities for friendship.

For learning.

For laughter.

For discovery.

For love.

For meaning.

And for experiences that may surprise you in wonderful ways.

The past has helped shape who you are.

But it does not have to determine who you are becoming.

Tomorrow is another page.

And you are still here to live it.

Chapter Thirteen

Purpose Without Pressure

We are often told that everyone must find their purpose.

Discover your calling.

Identify your mission.

Determine what you were born to accomplish.

And then devote your life to achieving it.

For some people, this is inspiring.

They discover a particular passion or calling and experience tremendous fulfillment in pursuing it.

But for others, the search for purpose becomes another source of anxiety.

What if I don't know my purpose?

What if I never discover my calling?

What if I am not destined to accomplish anything extraordinary?

What if my life is simply ordinary?

I would like to offer a reassuring possibility.

You do not have to accomplish something extraordinary for your life to have meaning.

The Purpose of Being Alive

What if purpose were not necessarily something we had to discover?

What if it were something we could experience and express through the way we live?

We can find meaning in loving our families.

In caring for friends.

In helping neighbours.

In learning something new.

In creating beauty.

In sharing laughter.

In contributing to our communities.

In making another person's day a little brighter.

None of these activities requires a grand mission.

And yet, each can give our lives meaning.

The Difference Between Purpose and Achievement

I have pursued some very ambitious dreams.

I continue to envision a world in which people experience greater love, kindness, peace, and cooperation.

I call this vision A NuVo World.

It is something I care about deeply.

But I have come to appreciate that I do not have to transform the entire world to make my life meaningful.

If I help one person feel less alone, that matters.

If I make someone smile, that matters.

If I bring happiness into my marriage, that matters.

If I encourage someone who is discouraged, that matters.

The value of these experiences does not depend upon their scale.

And my worth does not depend upon whether my largest dreams are ever realized.

A Purpose That Travels With You

One of the beautiful things about defining purpose through our values is that it can accompany us wherever life takes us.

If our purpose is to express kindness, we can do so at home, at work, in a hospital, or on a sidewalk.

If our purpose is to learn, we can remain curious regardless of our age.

If our purpose is to love, we can find opportunities in countless relationships.

If our purpose is to contribute, we can begin with whatever resources and abilities are available to us.

Our circumstances may change.

But our capacity to live meaningfully does not disappear simply because our plans have changed.

You Are Not an Assignment

There is another thought I find particularly liberating.

What if life is not an assignment we must complete?

What if we are not required to justify our existence through some great accomplishment?

What if we are allowed to enjoy being alive?

To appreciate beauty.

To develop relationships.

To explore interests.

To discover what brings us happiness.

And to contribute when and where we can?

Perhaps purpose need not be a burden.

Perhaps it can be an expression of the things we love.

You do not have to spend your life searching for one magnificent reason to exist.

You can discover countless beautiful reasons to enjoy existing.

And perhaps that is purpose enough.

Chapter Fourteen

The Freedom of Letting Go

There are things in life we can influence.

And there are things we cannot control.

We can make plans.

We can work toward goals.

We can express our hopes.

We can offer love, kindness, and encouragement.

But we cannot guarantee outcomes.

We cannot control how others respond.

We cannot ensure that every dream will unfold as imagined.

And we cannot prevent life from bringing unexpected changes.

Yet we spend enormous amounts of energy trying to do precisely that.

We worry.

We plan.

We reconsider.

We imagine every possible difficulty.

And sometimes we become so preoccupied with controlling tomorrow that we forget to enjoy today.

The Weight of Expectations

Expectations can be wonderful when they inspire us.

But they can become burdens when we attach our happiness to their fulfillment.

We expect our careers to develop in particular ways.

We expect relationships to last.

We expect our efforts to produce certain results.

We expect life to reward us according to our plans.

And when reality unfolds differently, we may experience disappointment, frustration, or despair.

These feelings are natural.

But there is a difference between experiencing disappointment and allowing disappointment to define our lives.

We can acknowledge what has happened.

We can learn from it.

We can make new plans.

And we can gradually release our insistence that life must unfold exactly as we imagined.

Let Go and Let God

One of the expressions that has become particularly meaningful to me is:

"Let go and let God."

For me, these words represent a willingness to live with trust rather than constant anxiety.

They do not mean abandoning responsibility.

They do not mean refusing to act.

They do not mean sitting quietly while life passes by.

They mean doing what I can, with love and sincerity, while accepting that I cannot control everything that follows.

I can plant seeds.

I can nurture relationships.

I can pursue ideas.

I can offer encouragement.

I can create opportunities.

But I cannot force the seeds to grow.

I cannot determine how another person will respond.

And I cannot guarantee the outcome of every effort.

My responsibility is to live according to my values.

The results are not always mine to command.

The Peace of Uncertainty

We often imagine that peace will come when we finally know what the future holds.

When the job is secure.

When the finances are settled.

When the relationship is certain.

When the project succeeds.

When all our questions have been answered.

But life rarely provides that kind of certainty.

There is always another unknown.

Another possibility.

Another unexpected development.

Perhaps peace must come from something other than certainty.

Perhaps it comes from learning to live well even when the future remains unclear.

From trusting our ability to respond to what arises.

From appreciating the present.

From recognizing that uncertainty does not eliminate the possibility of happiness.

Open Hands, Open Heart

I love the image of living with open hands.

We can welcome wonderful experiences without desperately trying to hold on to them forever.

We can pursue dreams without allowing them to become prisons.

We can love people without trying to control them.

We can make plans while remaining open to possibilities we never anticipated.

And when life changes, as it inevitably will, we can adapt.

We can grieve.

We can learn.

We can begin again.

And we can continue discovering reasons to appreciate being alive.

Letting go is not giving up on life.

It is releasing the belief that life must unfold according to our plans before we can enjoy it.

We can do our best.

We can love wholeheartedly.

We can dream magnificently.

And we can leave room for life to surprise us.

Sometimes, the most beautiful experiences are the ones we never planned.

Chapter Fifteen

The Freedom to Forgive

Every human life contains moments of disappointment.

People hurt us.

Promises are broken.

Relationships change.

Trust is betrayed.

Sometimes the wounds are small and quickly forgotten.

Others remain with us for years.

And without realizing it, we can begin carrying those experiences into every new day.

We remember what happened.

We replay conversations.

We imagine what we should have said.

We wonder how life might have been different.

And sometimes we allow the actions of another person to occupy far more of our lives than they deserve.

The Weight We Carry

There is an old understanding that resentment often harms the person carrying it.

I think there is considerable wisdom in that observation.

When we remain consumed by anger over something that happened years ago, we may find ourselves reliving the experience long after the event has ended.

The other person may have moved on.

The circumstances may have changed.

But we continue carrying the emotional burden.

Forgiveness offers another possibility.

Not the possibility of changing the past.

But the possibility of changing our relationship with it.

Forgiveness Is Not Approval

I want to make an important distinction.

Forgiving someone does not mean pretending that what happened was acceptable.

It does not require us to excuse harmful behaviour.

It does not mean abandoning appropriate boundaries or allowing someone to hurt us again.

And it certainly does not require us to restore a relationship that is unsafe or destructive.

Forgiveness, when we are ready for it, can simply mean choosing not to allow an old injury to dominate the rest of our lives.

It is a release.

A recognition that while we cannot change what happened, we may be able to reclaim some of the peace that was lost.

Forgiving Ourselves

Perhaps the most difficult forgiveness is the forgiveness we offer ourselves.

We remember our mistakes.

The opportunities we missed.

The things we said.

The decisions we regret.

And we sometimes judge ourselves far more harshly than we would ever judge a friend.

But consider this.

You made those decisions with the understanding, circumstances, and abilities you possessed at the time.

Perhaps you would choose differently today.

Perhaps you have learned something important.

That is part of becoming.

We do not need to spend the rest of our lives punishing ourselves for not having possessed yesterday the wisdom we have developed today.

We can acknowledge our mistakes.

Make amends where possible.

Learn.

And move forward.

A Lighter Way to Live

I believe that one of the most beautiful aspects of growing older is the opportunity to travel more lightly.

To release unnecessary grievances.

To stop revisiting old arguments.

To recognize that not every disagreement requires a victory.

And to understand that peace may be more valuable than proving we were right.

Forgiveness is not always easy.

Sometimes it takes time.

Sometimes it requires help.

And sometimes the best we can do is begin by becoming willing to release a little of the burden.

That is enough for today.

We cannot rewrite yesterday.

But we can refuse to let yesterday write every page of tomorrow.

Chapter Sixteen

Gratitude Changes Everything

I have discovered that one of the simplest ways to make life more beautiful is to appreciate it.

Not occasionally.

Not only when something extraordinary happens.

But throughout the ordinary experiences of everyday living.

There is so much to appreciate.

And yet, it is remarkably easy to overlook.

We become accustomed to our surroundings.

We take familiar relationships for granted.

We rush through meals.

We stop noticing the beauty of our neighbourhoods.

We focus on what is missing rather than what is present.

And in doing so, we sometimes overlook the very things that make our lives wonderful.

The Miracle of the Familiar

Think about someone you love.

Perhaps a spouse.

A child.

A parent.

A friend.

Imagine how extraordinary it would have seemed, before you met, to know that this person would someday become such an important part of your life.

And yet, once they become familiar, we may stop appreciating the wonder of their presence.

We become preoccupied with routines.

Responsibilities.

Little disagreements.

Everyday concerns.

And we forget to marvel at the simple fact that we have someone with whom to share our lives.

I try never to lose sight of how fortunate I feel to share my life with Christy.

We laugh together.

We enjoy meals.

We share music.

We tease each other.

We have our routines and our little rituals.

And I find tremendous happiness in these experiences.

They are not interruptions to the important business of living.

They are the important business of living.

Gratitude Without Denial

Gratitude does not require us to pretend that everything is wonderful.

Life contains pain.

Loss.

Illness.

Financial difficulties.

Loneliness.

Disappointment.

And sometimes there are days when gratitude feels very far away.

We should not use positive thinking to dismiss genuine suffering.

But even during difficult periods, it may be possible to recognize something that brings comfort.

A person who cares.

A moment of relief.

A small kindness.

A memory.

A possibility.

Gratitude does not erase hardship.

It simply allows us to recognize that hardship may not be the entirety of our experience.

Learning to Notice

I think gratitude is something we can cultivate through attention.

When we begin looking for things to appreciate, we often discover more of them.

A friendly greeting.

A delicious meal.

A comfortable chair.

A favourite song.

A beautiful tree.

A moment of laughter.

A warm embrace.

These experiences may have been present all along.

What changes is our willingness to notice them.

And perhaps that is one of the great secrets of happiness.

We do not always need to change our circumstances.

Sometimes we need to change what we are paying attention to.

The Richness of Appreciation

Imagine beginning each morning with a simple thought:

"What a wonderful opportunity I have to experience another day."

Not because everything will go perfectly.

Not because every problem has disappeared.

But because another day offers possibilities.

For connection.

For discovery.

For kindness.

For joy.

For becoming.

And imagine ending each evening by remembering a few moments that made the day worthwhile.

Over time, we may discover that our lives contain far more beauty than we previously recognized.

Gratitude does not necessarily give us more things.

It helps us experience more of the value in the things we already have.

And that can change everything.

Chapter Seventeen

The Beauty of a Simpler Life

We have become remarkably skilled at making life complicated.

We fill our calendars.

We accumulate possessions.

We accept responsibilities.

We pursue opportunities.

We establish goals.

And before long, we find ourselves wondering why we have so little time to enjoy the lives we have created.

Sometimes the answer is surprisingly simple.

We have filled our lives with more than we need.

More Is Not Always Better

There is nothing inherently wrong with having a busy life.

Some people thrive on activity.

They enjoy demanding careers, ambitious projects, and full schedules.

And that can be wonderful.

But busyness becomes a problem when it prevents us from experiencing the things we value most.

When we are too busy to enjoy our families.

Too busy to develop friendships.

Too busy to rest.

Too busy to play.

Too busy to notice the beauty around us.

At that point, we might reasonably ask whether all our activity is actually making our lives better.

Creating Space

I have come to appreciate the importance of having room in my life.

Room for unexpected conversations.

Room for spontaneous experiences.

Room for quiet reflection.

Room for laughter.

Room for doing absolutely nothing in particular.

Some of my most enjoyable mornings unfold without any elaborate plan.

I go outside.

I greet people.

I see who appears.

I listen.

I enjoy whatever conversations develop.

And then I return home.

There is no complicated schedule.

No performance target.

No requirement to produce a particular result.

The experience itself is the reward.

Simplicity Is Personal

A simpler life does not necessarily mean owning fewer possessions or moving to a smaller home.

It does not require everyone to adopt the same lifestyle.

For one person, simplicity might mean reducing unnecessary commitments.

For another, it might mean spending less money.

For someone else, it might mean turning off the television occasionally, spending more time outdoors, or learning to say no.

The essential question is not how little we can live with.

It is how much of what fills our lives genuinely contributes to our well-being.

And whether we are leaving enough space for the experiences that matter most.

The Courage to Leave Things Undone

There will always be something else we could accomplish.

Another email.

Another task.

Another project.

Another opportunity.

Another responsibility.

We could spend every waking hour doing things and still never reach the end of the list.

At some point, we must give ourselves permission to stop.

To sit down.

To enjoy a meal.

To listen to music.

To spend time with someone we love.

To appreciate the moment without worrying about what remains unfinished.

This is not irresponsibility.

It is recognizing that our lives are not merely collections of tasks.

They are experiences to be lived.

A beautiful life is not necessarily a life filled with more.

Sometimes it is a life with enough space to appreciate what is already there.

Chapter Eighteen

Growing Older, Becoming More

There is a curious tendency in our society to regard aging primarily as a process of loss.

We speak of declining abilities.

Missed opportunities.

Changing appearances.

Physical limitations.

And the gradual narrowing of life's possibilities.

Certainly, aging brings challenges.

Our bodies change.

Some activities become more difficult.

People we love may become ill or pass away.

And we become increasingly aware that our time is not unlimited.

But I believe there is another way to understand growing older.

It can also be a magnificent process of becoming.

The Richness of Experience

At sixty-six, I possess something I did not have at twenty-six.

A lifetime of experience.

I have known success and disappointment.

I have developed friendships.

I have pursued dreams.

I have made mistakes.

I have experienced love.

I have learned things about myself and others that I could not possibly have understood when I was younger.

And I continue to learn.

This accumulation of experience does not automatically make us wise.

Wisdom requires reflection, openness, and a willingness to reconsider what we believe.

But growing older provides opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of life.

And that is something worth celebrating.

The Freedom to Choose What Matters

One of the great advantages of age can be a growing clarity about what is important.

We may become less concerned with impressing others.

Less interested in unnecessary competition.

Less willing to sacrifice our happiness for recognition.

And more appreciative of relationships, peace, health, and meaningful experiences.

We may discover that many of the things we once considered essential were not particularly important after all.

And that some of the simplest pleasures were among life's greatest treasures.

The Adventure Is Not Finished

I have no desire to spend my remaining years simply remembering what I accomplished in the past.

I want to continue living.

I want to meet new people.

Develop new friendships.

Explore new ideas.

Enjoy new experiences.

Laugh.

Love.

Learn.

And contribute whatever I can to making this world a little kinder and more beautiful.

I do not know how many years lie ahead.

None of us does.

But I know that today is available to me.

And I intend to enjoy it.

Becoming Until the Very End

Perhaps the most beautiful thing about growing older is recognizing that we never have to stop becoming.

We can become more patient.

More appreciative.

More compassionate.

More curious.

More loving.

We can develop new interests.

Discover new pleasures.

Form new relationships.

And continue finding meaning in the changing circumstances of our lives.

There may be things we can no longer do.

But there may also be things we can understand and appreciate more deeply than ever before.

Aging does not have to mean that our lives are becoming less significant.

It may mean that we are discovering new ways to experience their significance.

We do not have to remain young to remain fully alive.

And we do not have to stop becoming simply because we are growing older.

Every age offers its own possibilities.

Every season has its own beauty.

And every day remains an invitation to live.

Chapter Nineteen

The Riches of Friendship

There are people who possess enormous wealth but have very few people with whom to share their lives.

And there are people who possess very little financially but enjoy an abundance of friendship, companionship, and love.

I have come to believe that the second group may possess some of life's greatest treasures.

Friendship is extraordinary.

It cannot be demanded.

It cannot be purchased.

And it cannot be manufactured through some complicated formula.

It develops when people connect, share experiences, and gradually discover that they enjoy being part of one another's lives.

From Strangers to Friends

Every morning, I greet people in my neighbourhood.

Many of them were complete strangers when I first began.

I didn't know their names.

I didn't know where they worked.

I didn't know anything about their families, their interests, or their lives.

We simply exchanged greetings.

But something wonderful happened over time.

A smile became a conversation.

A conversation became a familiar encounter.

And familiar encounters gradually became friendships.

Not necessarily deep, lifelong friendships.

But genuine human connections.

People whose presence brings pleasure.

People whose absence is noticed.

People with whom it is enjoyable to share a few minutes.

And I find these relationships enormously enriching.

Friendship Without Expectations

One of the beautiful things about friendship is that it does not always require elaborate commitments.

We do not have to spend hours together.

We do not have to share every detail of our lives.

We do not have to agree about everything.

Sometimes friendship is simply the pleasure of recognizing another human being and being recognized in return.

A few minutes of conversation.

A shared joke.

An expression of concern.

A warm greeting.

These small connections can contribute enormously to our sense of belonging.

And belonging is one of the great human needs.

Making Room for Others

Friendship requires something that cannot be purchased.

Attention.

We have to make room for people.

We have to be willing to listen.

To show interest.

To remember little things.

To allow relationships to develop naturally.

And sometimes we have to take the first step.

Say hello.

Introduce ourselves.

Invite someone for coffee.

Ask a question.

Offer a little kindness.

We may be surprised by the relationships that emerge.

Not everyone will become a friend.

And that is perfectly fine.

But every meaningful friendship begins with some form of connection.

A Life Rich in People

When I think about the richness of my life, I think about Christy.

I think about the people I greet each morning.

I think about the friendships I have developed over the years.

I think about conversations, laughter, shared meals, and moments of genuine human connection.

These experiences make my life beautiful.

And they remind me that prosperity can take many forms.

A rich life is not necessarily one filled with possessions.

Sometimes it is one filled with people who are happy to see you.

Chapter Twenty

The Peace of Being Yourself

There is something exhausting about pretending to be someone we are not.

Trying to meet everyone's expectations.

Trying to fit into roles that do not suit us.

Trying to appear more successful, confident, intelligent, or accomplished than we feel.

Trying to become the person we imagine others want us to be.

And all the while, the person we actually are waits quietly for permission to exist.

I think one of the greatest freedoms in life is discovering that we no longer have to pretend.

The Courage to Be Authentic

Being ourselves is not always easy.

We may hold opinions that differ from those around us.

We may have interests that others do not understand.

We may pursue dreams that seem unusual.

We may choose lifestyles that do not conform to conventional expectations.

And sometimes we may experience criticism or rejection.

But there is a tremendous difference between living according to our own values and spending our lives seeking approval.

We can listen to others.

We can remain open to learning.

We can acknowledge our mistakes.

And we can respect different perspectives.

Without surrendering our individuality.

You Are Allowed to Change

Authenticity does not mean remaining exactly the same throughout our lives.

We are allowed to reconsider our beliefs.

To develop new interests.

To change our priorities.

To discover that something we once considered important no longer matters.

To become different from the person we were ten years ago.

This is not necessarily inconsistency.

It can be growth.

The goal is not to preserve an unchanging identity.

It is to live with sincerity and openness as our understanding develops.

The Quiet Confidence of Acceptance

There is a beautiful peace in accepting ourselves.

Not because we believe we are always right.

Not because we consider ourselves superior.

Not because we have nothing left to learn.

But because we no longer feel compelled to justify our existence.

We can acknowledge our strengths.

Accept our limitations.

Recognize our mistakes.

Celebrate our individuality.

And continue becoming.

We do not have to win everyone's approval.

We do not have to be understood by everyone.

And we do not have to live according to someone else's definition of success.

The Person You Get to Be

Imagine how much energy becomes available when we stop trying to impress the world.

Energy for relationships.

For creativity.

For learning.

For kindness.

For enjoyment.

For discovering what genuinely matters to us.

We may find ourselves becoming more relaxed.

More generous.

More curious.

And more willing to appreciate the individuality of others.

Because when we stop demanding perfection from ourselves, we may also become less inclined to demand it from everyone else.

You do not have to become someone else to deserve a beautiful life.

You can begin by embracing the person you already are.

And then enjoy the extraordinary adventure of discovering who you are becoming.

Chapter Twenty-One

One Person Can Make a Difference

We live in a world filled with enormous challenges.

Poverty.

Loneliness.

Conflict.

Injustice.

Environmental concerns.

Human suffering.

And when we consider the scale of these problems, it is easy to feel overwhelmed.

What can one person possibly do?

How can an ordinary individual make a meaningful difference in such a complicated world?

I believe the answer begins much closer to home than we might imagine.

The Power of One Encounter

Imagine that you meet someone who is having a difficult day.

Perhaps they are worried about money.

Perhaps they are lonely.

Perhaps they have received disappointing news.

Perhaps they simply feel invisible.

You stop.

You smile.

You listen.

You offer a little encouragement.

And for a few minutes, that person feels understood.

You may never know what difference your kindness has made.

Perhaps it helped them face the rest of their day.

Perhaps it reminded them that someone cares.

Perhaps it encouraged them to extend kindness to someone else.

Or perhaps it simply gave them a moment of happiness.

Is that insignificant?

I don't think so.

Changing the World Within Reach

We sometimes imagine that changing the world requires extraordinary power.

Political influence.

Enormous wealth.

A large organization.

A revolutionary invention.

And certainly, these things can contribute to meaningful change.

But there is another kind of influence available to almost everyone.

The influence we have through our everyday interactions.

We can make our homes more loving.

Our workplaces more welcoming.

Our neighbourhoods more friendly.

Our communities more compassionate.

We can encourage people.

Connect people.

Help people.

And treat people with dignity.

These actions may never make the evening news.

But they matter to the people who experience them.

The Ripple Effect

One act of kindness can inspire another.

One friendship can lead to many others.

One welcoming person can change the atmosphere of a room.

One thoughtful conversation can influence someone's understanding of life.

We cannot predict how far these effects will travel.

And we do not need to.

The value of kindness does not depend upon our ability to measure its impact.

It is valuable because another human being has been treated with love and respect.

A Beautiful Responsibility

I have adopted a simple aspiration.

Whenever possible, I want people to leave my presence feeling a little better than they did before.

Perhaps they are smiling.

Perhaps they feel encouraged.

Perhaps they have enjoyed a laugh.

Perhaps they simply feel acknowledged.

I cannot always accomplish this.

And I certainly cannot control how others feel.

But I can bring kindness, warmth, and genuine interest to my encounters.

And that is something I can do every day.

You do not have to change the entire world to make a meaningful difference.

Begin with the world immediately around you.

You may discover that your influence extends much farther than you ever imagined.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Heaven on Earth Is a Way of Living

What would Heaven on Earth look like?

Would it be a world without suffering?

Without conflict?

Without poverty?

Without loneliness?

A world in which everyone experienced love, peace, friendship, security, and happiness?

It is a beautiful vision.

And one that I believe is worthy of our greatest imagination and effort.

But I have come to appreciate something important.

We do not have to wait until the entire world has been transformed before we begin experiencing and creating elements of Heaven on Earth.

We can begin now.

A Different Way of Seeing

Imagine two people living in the same neighbourhood.

They walk along the same streets.

Visit the same stores.

Experience the same weather.

And encounter many of the same people.

Yet their experiences of life may be very different.

One moves through the neighbourhood feeling disconnected.

The other greets people, develops friendships, notices beauty, and discovers opportunities for kindness.

The physical surroundings may be identical.

But the experience of living within them is not.

This does not mean that happiness is simply a matter of attitude.

Circumstances matter.

Health matters.

Safety matters.

Financial security matters.

But our relationships and the way we engage with the world can also make an extraordinary difference.

Creating What We Hope to Experience

If we want to live in a kinder world, we can begin by expressing kindness.

If we want a friendlier community, we can begin by being friendly.

If we want a world in which people feel valued, we can begin by treating people as valuable.

If we want more love, we can offer love.

If we want more peace, we can try to bring peace into our relationships.

These actions will not solve every problem.

But they can make the world immediately around us more beautiful.

And that is a meaningful beginning.

A NuVo World

For many years, I have envisioned the possibility of creating A NuVo World.

A world in which people recognize their shared humanity.

A world in which communities become places of genuine friendship and belonging.

A world in which people cooperate rather than constantly compete.

A world in which everyone has opportunities to live with dignity and experience the richness of being alive.

I do not know exactly how such a world might unfold.

But I know that I can begin expressing its values in my own life.

In my marriage.

In my neighbourhood.

In my friendships.

In my conversations.

And in the choices I make each day.

The World Begins With Us

Perhaps the most important realization is that we are not merely spectators in the world.

We are participants.

The way we treat others contributes to the kind of world they experience.

Our attitudes influence our relationships.

Our actions affect our communities.

And our willingness to care can make a meaningful difference.

Heaven on Earth, as I envision it, is not merely a distant destination.

It is also a way of living.

A way of relating.

A way of recognizing the extraordinary value of every human being.

And a way of creating moments of love, joy, peace, and belonging wherever we can.

We may not be able to create a perfect world overnight.

But we can begin creating a more loving world today.

One day.

One person.

One beautiful moment at a time.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Courage to Love Your Life

There is something remarkably courageous about loving your life.

Not the life you wish you had.

Not the life you imagined when you were younger.

Not the life someone else appears to be living.

But the life that is actually yours.

With its unexpected turns.

Its disappointments.

Its imperfections.

Its ordinary routines.

And its extraordinary possibilities.

The Life That Was Supposed to Be

Most of us begin adulthood with expectations.

We imagine the careers we will pursue.

The relationships we will develop.

The homes we will own.

The families we will raise.

The experiences we will enjoy.

And then life unfolds.

Sometimes beautifully.

Sometimes painfully.

Often in ways we could never have anticipated.

And we may find ourselves comparing the life we have with the life we once expected.

That comparison can become a source of enormous unhappiness.

Not because our present lives contain no beauty.

But because we are measuring them against an imagined alternative.

Choosing to See What Is Here

There is a difference between accepting our circumstances and surrendering our dreams.

We can acknowledge that some things have not worked out as planned.

We can continue seeking improvements.

We can pursue new opportunities.

And we can still appreciate the life available to us today.

I love my life.

Not because everything has unfolded according to my expectations.

It certainly has not.

But because I have discovered so many things worth loving.

My wife.

My friendships.

My neighbourhood.

My writing.

My dreams.

My opportunities to connect with others.

My ability to enjoy ordinary experiences.

And my continuing curiosity about what tomorrow may bring.

I do not need my life to resemble anyone else's.

I want to enjoy the life that is mine.

Happiness Is Not a Competition

One of the great difficulties of modern life is the temptation to compare ourselves with others.

Someone has a larger home.

Someone earns more money.

Someone travels more frequently.

Someone appears more successful.

Someone seems to have accomplished more.

But another person's happiness does not diminish our own possibilities.

And another person's achievements do not make our lives less valuable.

We are not competing to determine whose existence matters most.

We are each living our own extraordinary human adventure.

Loving Without Pretending

Loving your life does not mean that you must enjoy every experience.

There will be difficult days.

There will be disappointments.

There will be moments of sadness, frustration, and uncertainty.

You may wish that some circumstances were different.

That is part of being human.

But it is possible to love a life that contains difficulties.

Just as we can love a person who is imperfect.

We can recognize the whole experience.

The joy and the sorrow.

The successes and the disappointments.

The expected and the unexpected.

And still find reasons to be grateful that we are here.

Your Life Is Worth Loving

I hope that somewhere in these pages, you have begun to recognize something wonderful.

You do not have to wait until your life becomes extraordinary according to someone else's standards.

You do not have to achieve more before you are entitled to happiness.

You do not have to become wealthy, famous, admired, or accomplished.

You can begin discovering what makes your life beautiful right now.

And you can continue making it more beautiful tomorrow.

The courage to love your life begins when you stop demanding that it become someone else's.

Your life is yours.

And it is worthy of your love.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Life You Are Living Is the Life That Matters

And so we come to the end of our journey together.

Although, of course, it is not really an ending.

It is another beginning.

Another opportunity to look at life differently.

Another invitation to appreciate the extraordinary experience of being alive.

Throughout this book, we have explored a simple but powerful idea.

You are not what you do.

You are not what you earn.

You are not what you own.

You are not your accomplishments.

You are not your disappointments.

You are not your job title, your social status, or the opinions of others.

You are a human being.

A person with experiences, memories, relationships, hopes, and possibilities.

A person capable of love.

Of kindness.

Of learning.

Of joy.

Of growth.

And of making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

The Question That Changes Everything

I would like to leave you with a question.

What if you stopped asking what you needed to accomplish before your life could become wonderful?

What if you began asking how you could experience more of the wonder already available to you?

Perhaps you would spend more time with people you love.

Perhaps you would reconnect with an old friend.

Perhaps you would take a walk without worrying about where you were going.

Perhaps you would listen to music.

Play a game.

Read a book.

Enjoy a meal.

Begin a conversation.

Or simply sit quietly and appreciate the remarkable fact that you are alive.

None of these experiences requires you to become someone else.

They are available to the person you are today.

The Extraordinary Freedom of Being

There is something deeply liberating about recognizing that we do not have to prove our worth.

We can work without allowing work to define us.

We can pursue success without making success the condition of our happiness.

We can welcome prosperity without confusing wealth with importance.

We can develop our abilities without rejecting who we are.

We can dream magnificently without allowing our dreams to rob us of the present.

And we can continue becoming while appreciating the people we already are.

This is the art of being.

Not a technique.

Not a formula.

Not another assignment.

But a way of approaching life with greater freedom, appreciation, love, and joy.

One Beautiful Life

I think again of Scott D.

The man I met stocking shelves in Dollarama.

The man whose story helped inspire this book.

I hope that Scott discovers wonderful opportunities in the years ahead.

I hope he finds satisfying work, meaningful relationships, and experiences that bring him tremendous happiness.

But above all, I hope he recognizes that his life is already worthy of love and appreciation.

And I hope the same for you.

Whatever your circumstances.

Whatever your history.

Whatever dreams you have accomplished or abandoned.

Whatever disappointments you have experienced.

Whatever uncertainties lie ahead.

Your life matters.

Not because of what you may someday achieve.

But because you are here.

Because you are alive.

Because you have the capacity to experience and share the extraordinary richness of human existence.

The Adventure Continues

Tomorrow morning, another day will begin.

The sun will rise.

People will go to work.

Children will go to school.

Neighbours will pass one another on the sidewalk.

Families will share meals.

Friends will laugh.

Some people will celebrate.

Others will struggle.

And life will continue unfolding in all its beautiful complexity.

You will have another opportunity to participate.

To love.

To learn.

To connect.

To appreciate.

To contribute.

To become.

And perhaps, if you remember nothing else from this book, you will remember this:

You do not have to accomplish something extraordinary to be an extraordinary human being.

You do not have to wait for tomorrow to begin living beautifully.

And you do not have to become somebody.

You already are somebody.

You always were.

You always will be.

So go outside.

Greet someone.

Share a smile.

Enjoy a conversation.

Tell someone you love them.

Listen to your favourite music.

Laugh.

Play.

Dream.

And appreciate the extraordinary privilege of being alive.

Because at the end of our lives, the greatest question may not be what we accomplished, what we accumulated, or how successful we became.

It may simply be this:

Did we love being alive?

I hope your answer is a resounding yes.

And I hope that answer grows more beautiful with every passing day.

For life is not merely something to accomplish.

It is something to experience.

Something to share.

Something to cherish.

Something to love.

Something to be.

Conclusion

And Now, Simply Be

I would like to leave you with one final thought.

You have nothing to prove.

Nothing.

You do not have to become wealthy.

You do not have to become famous.

You do not have to accomplish something extraordinary.

You do not have to live up to someone else's expectations.

And you certainly do not have to spend the rest of your life trying to become worthy of love, happiness, dignity, or belonging.

You already are.

Think about that for a moment.

What if you truly believed it?

What if you woke up tomorrow morning knowing that your worth was not dependent upon what you accomplished that day?

What if you no longer measured yourself against your neighbours, your colleagues, your friends, or the person you once imagined you would become?

What if you understood that your life was not a competition, an examination, or an endless series of assignments?

What if you realized that you were free?

Free to love.

Free to laugh.

Free to explore.

Free to discover.

Free to make mistakes.

Free to begin again.

Free to enjoy the extraordinary gift of simply being alive.

Wouldn't that change everything?

The Life I Love

I have lived a life filled with remarkable experiences.

I have enjoyed successes I could scarcely have imagined when I was younger.

I have also experienced disappointments, reversals, and circumstances I never anticipated.

And through it all, I have come to appreciate something that now seems wonderfully simple.

I do not need my life to be different in order to love it.

Every morning, I have opportunities to connect with people in my neighbourhood.

Every day, I have opportunities to share love and laughter with my wonderful wife, Christy Anne.

I can write.

I can dream.

I can enjoy music.

I can develop friendships.

I can appreciate a delicious meal.

I can offer encouragement to someone who needs it.

And I can continue exploring the extraordinary possibilities of this magnificent adventure we call life.

I do not have to wait for some great accomplishment to make these experiences meaningful.

They already are.

I am not suggesting that my life is without difficulties.

No one's life is.

But I have learned that I can experience enormous happiness without requiring everything to unfold exactly as I wish.

And that realization has brought me a freedom I would not exchange for any amount of money.

The World We Could Create

Now imagine what might happen if more of us began living this way.

Imagine a world in which people no longer felt compelled to prove their importance through wealth, status, or achievement.

Imagine children growing up knowing that their worth was never in question.

Imagine workplaces where people were valued as human beings, not merely as instruments of productivity.

Imagine communities where neighbours genuinely cared about one another.

Imagine relationships built upon love rather than expectations.

Imagine a world in which success was measured not only by what we accomplished, but by how we lived, how we loved, and how we treated one another.

I believe such a world is worth imagining.

And more importantly, I believe it is worth helping to create.

Not through some enormous undertaking that must be completed before we can begin enjoying life.

But through the simple choices we make every day.

A smile.

A conversation.

An act of kindness.

A moment of patience.

A willingness to listen.

An expression of love.

These are the beginnings of a more beautiful world.

And they are available to us right now.

The Beautiful Adventure of Becoming

There is one final distinction I hope you will carry with you.

Being enough does not mean that your journey of becoming is finished.

Quite the opposite.

You can love who you are today while remaining wonderfully excited about who you might become tomorrow.

You can be content without becoming complacent.

You can dream without being dissatisfied.

You can grow without rejecting yourself.

And you can pursue extraordinary possibilities without making your happiness dependent upon their realization.

This is the beautiful balance I hope you discover.

To be completely at peace with who you are.

And endlessly curious about who you are becoming.

To appreciate today.

And welcome tomorrow.

To love your life as it is.

And remain open to all the magnificent ways it might unfold.

My Wish for You

I hope you wake up tomorrow morning with a smile.

I hope you find something beautiful in the day ahead.

I hope someone makes you laugh.

I hope you make someone else laugh.

I hope you experience the warmth of friendship.

I hope you discover opportunities to express kindness.

I hope you enjoy a wonderful meal, a favourite song, a meaningful conversation, or a quiet moment of peace.

I hope you recognize that even the most ordinary day can contain extraordinary beauty.

And when difficulties arise, as they inevitably will, I hope you remember that they do not diminish your worth.

You are still somebody.

You are still deserving of love.

And your life is still unfolding.

Above all, I hope you never again postpone your happiness because you believe you have not yet accomplished enough.

You have already been given something extraordinary.

A life.

Your life.

And it is yours to experience, to cherish, to share, and to love.

So please, stop worrying quite so much about what you must do.

Stop measuring your life against what you have achieved.

Stop waiting for the world to tell you that you are enough.

Take a moment.

Look around you.

Appreciate where you are.

Appreciate who you are.

And appreciate the extraordinary possibilities that remain.

Then go out into the world and live.

Love generously.

Laugh frequently.

Dream magnificently.

Treat others kindly.

Welcome each new day.

And enjoy the beautiful, never-ending adventure of becoming.

Because you are not here merely to make a living.

You are here to live a life.

And that life is not something you must earn.

It is something you have already been given.

You are enough.

You are becoming.

And you are alive.

What an extraordinary gift.

What a magnificent adventure.

What a wonderful reason to celebrate.

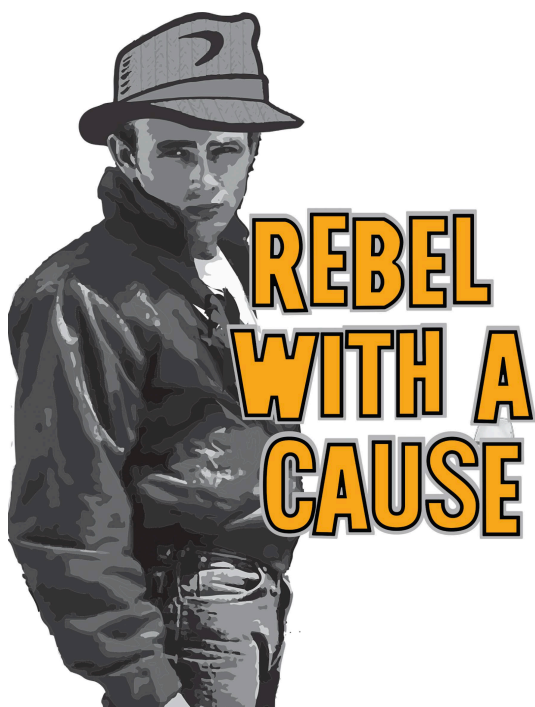
And now, simply be.

With love and gratitude,

Ross Harvey

Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal

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