

If You Had It to Do Over

One of the earliest shocks for me and my high-school classmates came when two popular teenage girls, both cheerleaders, were killed in an automobile accident on Highway 70 outside of Cookeville, Tennessee, after they left a drive-in restaurant headed for home.

In the years since, on numerous occasions, situations have occurred when people die at an early age, be it from an accident or natural causes such as a heart attack or the effects of cancer. We mourn for years unfulfilled, especially with people whose lives hold such promise.

According to a government report, life expectancy in the United States has risen to 78.8 years – a record high. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics said the news is a little better for women, a little worse for men. Life expectancy for females is 81.2 years. For males, it is 76.4 years.

But the length of our lives is not the real issue; it's the quality and meaning that matter. Not the years in a life, but the life in the years.

The late Leo Buscaglia, an American author, motivational speaker and a professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Southern California, was asked what he wanted to be remembered for when his life was over. He replied, "I want to be remembered as somebody who lived life fully and with passion. I've been asked to write my epitaph and I have always thought that the perfect one for my tombstone would be, 'Here lies Leo who died living.'"



Tony Campolo, sociologist, pastor, author and public speaker, told about a study in which 50 people over the age of 90 were asked to reflect upon their lives. "If you had it to do over again," they were asked, "what would you do differently?" Although there were many answers, three responses dominated. They are:

1. "I would reflect more." Do you ever think that too much time is spent in *doing* and not enough spent thinking about what you are doing and why you are doing it? Reflection on your time and your priorities, your habits and behaviors, your attitudes and beliefs – in short, reflection on your life – will reveal to you what is truly important.
2. "I would risk more." Have you missed important opportunities because you were afraid to take a chance? Taking more calculated risks may be the only way to make an important dream come alive.

(more)

3. "I would do more things that would live on after I died." Are you immersed in something bigger and more enduring than your own existence? What will be your legacy?

Reflect more. Risk more. Leave a legacy. These are what elders say they would do if given a second chance.

And, of course, the beauty is this: We don't need a second chance at life to get it right. We can build a life around these values beginning today. And when it comes time for us to leave this existence, we can go with no regrets.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter