

LOOK TO THIS DAY

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One second is gone: time lost; with no chance or opportunity to ever regain or recapture that particular portion of life. But what did we do with it? Did we use that moment of life wisely?

How to live life to its fullest potential, how to live life creatively, how to live life successfully, this is the search confronting each of us. To face this challenge of life, there must be a clear understanding of three basic portions of life; yesterday and the past, tomorrow and the future, today and the present.

First, thinking of yesterday, it is easily observed that many of us dwell and actually live in the past. However, Emerson summed up the real importance of the past when he said, "The past is for us, but the sole terms on which it may become ours are its subordination to the present.

This lack of subordination can be dangerous to our lives in many ways.

Biff Lowman, Arthur Miller's character in Death of a Salesman, is a very good example of living in the past. This character, in his whole life, was successful at only one thing--high school football. The glory of this one success caused the failure of his entire life.

Each of us could have individual glories of the past that dominate our thinking and destroy our present living. It is not that past success is unimportant; it is wonderful to be a high school football hero. The fact is that we must constantly strive to add to these achievements.

In contrast to this great fallacy there are those who live in the hatred and despairs of the past. There is a story of a high school teacher who had graduated from college magna cum laude and even received advanced degrees. He had been teaching at this particular high school for ten years, longer than any other member of the faculty. The head master was retiring as he had been there for thirty years. Naturally our young friend thought that he would get the job. However, they by-passed him and got a man from outside of whom no one had ever heard. The young man was very disappointed so he demanded an explanation from the chairman of the board of trustees. The chairman said it was true that he had been there for ten years, but all he had done was repeat one year ten times. The chairman continued to tell the young man that he had not grown and that he was no different from what he was when he first came. Our friend was hurt, disappointed, angry; so he quit. He spent the rest of his life in the hatred and resentment of this one mistake, thus the failure of his entire life.

Therefore to subordinate the past to the present, it is obvious that we must not live in the glory of the past, that we must not continuously repeat the past, and that we must not live in the hatred and despairs of the past.

Another time that is important to our lives is tomorrow and the future. Henry Ward Beecher said, "We must live for the future, but we must find our life in the fidelities of the present..."

This point reminds me of a familiar television program, "Run for Your Life." The star, Ben Gazzara, plays the part of Paul Byrant, a character with an incurable disease and a very limited time to live. Each program depicts a different episode as he strives to forget all plans for tomorrow. It is interesting to see how he has caused life to mean so much more than the average person. The influence of his life upon others is also great.

Dreaming and planning is only natural and very important to our lives. But it is excessive dreaming and planning that can be dangerous. In the Music Man, Harold Hill reminded the old maid Marion about this excessive dreaming when he said, "Pile up enough tomorrows and you'll find you've collected nothing but a lot of empty yesterdays." Dreams, plans and intentions for the future could easily be meaningless.

In opposition to this idea, there are those who fear and worry about the future. You are familiar with friends who in response to a simple greeting will quote off to you a list of activities they have to do. They worry, they complain, they are miserable. Probably the time spent in worry and complaining, that person could have completed about half of that list. After all, today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday!

Therefore, to find our lives in the fidelities of the present, we must avoid excessive dreaming and strive to do away with useless worry.

Now we are to the most important time of our lives, today--the present. It is a point in time which like a point in mathematics has position but no magnitude. It is, and instantly it was. The fact is that life is now, this very moment, this very second. It is only by learning the art and skill of using every moment to its fullest do we really learn to live. Schiller once stated, "He who neglects the present moment throws away all he has."

The ideas that I have presented to you are beautifully explained in William James "philosophy of spacious present." To use these moments wisely, we must bring all experiences of the past, all expectations of the future with all the sensations and feelings of the present into this one full moment that we now live. The past is no more, the future not extent, and life is now. Not forgetting the past and keeping in mind the future, we must use these present moments.

These ideas may seem very insignificant as we look at our world situation; daily we hear news commentators discussing the latest developments in areas of national crisis. Weekly magazines reveal articles calling for urgent and drastic alterations in our present system. Governmental leaders advocate ideals as

democracy, freedom, civil rights, and free enterprise. However, as an individual, we can take no real action toward these abstract ideas.

On the other hand, this philosophy is something that you can do; real action can be taken. Eugenia Price said, "The great doing of little things means a great life." And great lives are the very basis for the solutions of our national problems. So as we strive to use each moment of life wisely

"Look to this day
For it is life, the very breath of life.
In its brief course lie all the
Verities and realities of your existence
The bliss of growth,
The glory of action
The splendor of beauty,
For yesterday it was but a dream
And tomorrow is only a vision;
But today well-lived makes
Every yesterday a dream of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!"

This is life; Live it!