

Summer Days

Stars, Meadows and More than Existing

Did you ever notice that life flies by at ever increasing speeds? Just when you think a day or a week or a year couldn't go any faster, it does. The pages fly off the calendar in some sort of blur. Some appointment that was months out is suddenly tomorrow. It seems you just changed the oil in the car a couple of weeks ago and it's time to do it again. You look in the mirror and wonder where the youthful "you" went. The kids grow up overnight, the first of the month seems to roll around every other day or so, the seasons are gone almost before we realize they arrived, and the horizon in front us becomes the fading landscape behind us in what seems an instant. Such is life.

Life goes fast. It moves incessantly. Enough is never enough. The last task leads to the next one while the one after that is getting ready so that it can drop itself on us at the most inopportune time. What was fixed is broken before you could enjoy it being fixed. What pleasures were set aside to be indulged in when time permitted is never gotten back to because time didn't permit it.

What in world is happening to us in all the demands and mayhem? Typically, we don't know. And we don't know because the demands and mayhem eat up most, if not all of our time, our energy, our attention, and ultimately our zest for living.

Living Verses Existing

There's the old adage about whether you're 'living' or 'existing.' Think about it. Most of us do little more than exist, expending each day plying the muddy waters of our daily lives, rowing hard against a relentless head current that never stops. Life becomes an all out effort to gain a little bit of ground if that's possible. Many times however, the best we can do is to be able to end our day grasping some pathetic shred of satisfaction feeling that while we didn't gain anything, at least we didn't lose any ground. In this sometimes titanic and frequently sad struggle we simply exist. And existing lays worlds away from authentic living.

We become so accustomed to functioning this way that we begin to confuse this existing stuff with real living. Plain and simply, it's not. Trying to keep up is not living, it's maintenance. We have surrounded ourselves with stuff, with activities, with demands, with investments and with careers that demand maintenance. Then we have all the things that life dumps on us that we have to solve or manage or sometimes just tolerate. We become slaves to that which is supposed to serve us and we find ourselves bent under the weight of life itself.

Stars and Meadows

A wise man once told a group of his followers to "come away and rest awhile." In that directive there was the understanding that pulling away from our lives is often the best way to see our lives. We've all heard the "you can't see the forest for the trees" thing. It's all one in the same. Life is so demanding that it becomes absorbing and blindingly consuming. It hems us into this box which in time becomes the sum total of our world, and ultimately the sum total of our existence. We can no longer see outside the box, so our recognition of something else out

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there diminishes to the point that we don't think it even exists. And if we believe that it does exist, we have no idea what it is or how to get out there.

Pull away for a minute or two. Forcefully, if necessary, but pull away even for the briefest of moments. Sit in a meadow this summer. Stare at the stars. Let your mind see figures in shifting clouds on a temperate summer's afternoon. Gaze at robust thunderheads as they build colossal fortresses on distant horizons. Watch children play, butterflies float on silken wings, birds dance with the wind and sunsets splash sleepy skies with the last colors of the day. Pull away.

Pulling away is about getting out of your box. It's not about some mystical experience or transcendental encounter. It's about stepping out into larger life as that life lies all around you. It's about realizing that we're all apart of something so much larger than ourselves, and vesting ourselves out in that place for a minute. It's stepping out into all the surrounds us so that we more effectively look back at the box we live in. From this vantage point 'existing' and 'living' are held up against one another in bold relief. Once we see the grand disparity, we can better make the changes that move us into a richer and fuller life.

Moving from Existing to Living

There are some ways to begin making the shift from 'existing' to 'living.' First, ask "why am I here?" That question implies a sense of purpose. Purpose gives life meaning. And meaning exhumes what has died and breathes new life into it.

Second, ask yourself what your passions are. What ignites and invigorates you? What is that energizes your mind, your heart, your creative energies and your imagination? Think about the things that stimulate you, not in the sense of some fleeting and cheap emotion, but things that stimulate your zest for living and your sense that you have a contribution to make that no one else can make.

Third, commit to pursue these things. Not haphazardly or irresponsibly. Not in a way that you forgo and forsake your responsibilities. But rather how you can weave the pursuit of these things into your life that enhances it and imputes your daily existence and routine with something that is invigorating and refreshing.

End the existing. Begin living. There's no better time than right now.