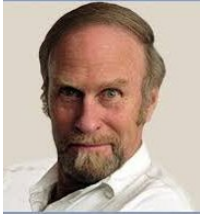


# Discovering The Meaning Of Life: What Is It?



By Frosty Wooldridge

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Just for a moment, let's separate ourselves from the troubles of Washington DC, world conflicts and the disarray that splashes across our television screens, nightly.

The one thing that our third president, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", continues to ring true in my mind for all of my lifetime. I am thankful for the luck and the privilege of being a citizen of the United States of America. That "luck" afforded me a life of personal choices and opportunities in whatever path I chose to live this amazing journey that all Americans may choose.

Therefore, at my advancing age, what have I done with my life? Was it meaningful? Did I accomplish anything of merit? Was I a kind person? Did I treat my wife well? Did I honor my friends? Did I support my community? Did I make a difference in the lives of the people I touched? Did I make the most of my "time" during my life on this planet?

It takes 60 seconds to make a minute, 60 minutes to make an hour, 24 hours to make a day and 365 days to make a year. What is ironic with the perspective of age, is that "time" flies by faster than anyone ever imagined. Before you know, those years piled up into a lifetime already past.

Captain Jean Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise said, "Someone once told me that "time" stalks us all our lives. I'd

rather believe that “time” is a companion that goes with us on a journey. It reminds us to cherish each moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we have lived.”

When I think of my youth, I am thankful for my luck of having had good, solid, loving parents. While we were strictly lower middle class, I always enjoyed a roof over my head, bed, toilet, shower, and food on the table. I attended average schools and played many sports. I delivered papers on my bike from age 12 to eighteen. Dad and mom were always proud of my siblings and me.

Tragedy did devastate my youth when my father died at the age of 46 when I was seventeen. His death wrecked my emotions, my mind, my spirit and my understanding of life. I questioned God, life and my part in it. Dad’s death took the wind out of my sails. It staggered me, and I can honestly say that his death changed my personality from high-spirited to a sobering and unique understanding that life is fleeting.

And yet, his guidance, along with my mother, who carried us onward, still guides me to this day. The pure goodness and tenacity of my father dwells in me for my entire life.

Whenever I faced a problem, he would put his arm around my shoulders, “Son, if anybody can do this, you can do it. You’re going to make a difference in this world.”

That stuck with me my whole life as a student, as an athlete, as a math-science teacher, as a cardiac medical tech, as an Army Lieutenant, as a college environmental science lecturer, as a United Van Lines truck driver, as a volunteer ski instructor for the disabled, as a husband, friend and stepfather. Dad’s guidance and confidence allowed me to continue my quest to become a writer and author.

I’ll never forget one customer that I moved from Detroit to Tampa said when I finished the job, “Frosty, thank you for

doing an exceptional job with our move. But you just don't seem to be a truck driver. What's actually driving you?"

I said, "You're right! I am a writer, temporarily driving a truck so I can pursue my dream of world travel and becoming a published author." He replied, "I could see something different in your eyes...and now, I know."

So, what about you? What about your life? What about your hopes and dreams? What about your path toward you gaining a "meaning for your life?" Are you having a good time? Are you tapping into the wellsprings of your creative talents? What makes your life worth getting up in the morning? Are you sitting in front of that TV set 4.1 hours daily like most Americans?

Henry David Thoreau said, "If you advance confidently toward your dreams, and endeavor to live the life which you have imagined, you will meet with success unexpected in common hours. You will pass through invisible boundaries. You will engage new and liberal laws. And you will live with the license of a higher order of beings."

His words stare at me on my office cork-board for more than 50 years now. I've discovered that if I maintain positive energy toward my daily life, then, life feeds that energy back to me. In that line of "flourishing your mind", such energies speak to your soul, to your spirit, and carry you onward toward your own destiny and toward living a "meaningful life."

The Roman philosopher Epictetus said, "Tentative efforts lead to tentative outcomes. Therefore give yourself fully to your endeavors. Decide to construct your character through excellent actions and determine to pay the price of a worthy goal. The trials you encounter will introduce you to your strengths. Remain steadfast...and one day you will build something that endures; something worthy of your potential."

To give you an example as to how he inspired me, it took me

hundreds of rejections slips from my first eight book manuscripts, and 22 years before a publisher accepted one of my books. Had I given up, I would never have become the author of 17 published books, and two more on the way, I've shown my dad that his guidance paved the way for my tenacious literary journey. [HowToLiveALifeOfAdventure.com](http://HowToLiveALifeOfAdventure.com)

Mind you, it's not important that you become a New York Times bestselling author, or an artist like Rembrandt, or one of the Beatles, or Taylor Swift, or Dolly Parton, or Shania Twain, or Karen Carpenter. It's not important that you become a football star, tennis star, LeBron James, or the next Simone Biles.

What's important is that you use your time on this planet to bring out the best in yourself. Live each day with zest, joy, energy and positive thoughts. Write a poem, sing a song, write a play, volunteer at your local food bank, take a walk in the woods, meditate, say a kind word to a cashier at the grocery checkout stand, eat a chocolate chip cookie, or, maybe a half dozen!

Viktor Frankl said, "Man/woman does not simply exist but always decides what his/her existence will be, what he/she will become the next moment. By the same token, every human being has the freedom to change at any instant."

Finally, Viktor Frankl said there were three paths to finding meaning in life (1) through creative actions, doing something creative, (2) experimental encounters, experiencing beauty, truth, goodness, nature, culture or loving another person, and (3) attitudinal choices, how to respond to unavoidable suffering such as a loved one's death.

At my father's funeral, the preacher said, "...In his passing it may be difficult to find the grit to regroup and advance. But, in sons, daughter and friends, Wooldridge left the hard core of aggressiveness and the will to win. The human body lasts less than a century. A man's achievements, good and bad,

endure to infinity. This then is the end result of fatherhood and friendship, and memories that survive the ages. In the eyes of the people that knew him, he shall remain a man of limitless courage, iron determination and a monumental sense of humor and compassion.”

“The adventure of life offers every human being the ability to live ‘the’ moment of his or her most passionate idea, fantasy or pursuit. It may take form in the arts, acting, sports, travel or other creative endeavors. Once engaged, a person enjoys ‘satori’ or the perfect moment. That instant may last seconds or a lifetime. The key to adventure whether it involves painting, dancing, sports or travel: throw yourself into it with rambunctious enthusiasm and zealous energy—which leads toward uncommon passion for living. By following that path, you will attract an amazing life that will imbue your spirit and fulfill your destiny as defined by you alone. In the end, you will savor the sweet taste of life pursuing goals that make you happy, rewarded and complete. As a bonus, you may share your life experiences with other bold and uncommon human beings that laugh at life, compare themselves with no one and enjoy a whale of a ride!” Frosty Wooldridge

In summation, thank you dear reader for reading my columns, and your comments over the years. Thank you to each kind person who offered me lunch or a bed or directions on my bicycle journeys around the world. Thank you to my wife Sandi for dancing, romancing and sharing this grand journey.

What is the meaning of life? It’s all right there in the palm of your mind.

My preacher, Rev. Josh Reeves, inspired this column. Thank you!

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