

January 14, 2019
By Jim Mathis

What Will You Remember 20 Years from Now?

The magazine ad for Lufthansa Airlines asked, "What moments will you still remember in 20 years?" As I showed it to my wife, she and I agreed that the things we had done earlier in the year would still be fresh in our minds 20 years from now. That included spending a week in Paris, followed by a photography trade show in Germany.

Our next question concerned what were we doing 20 years ago that stood out vividly in our memories today. We both immediately thought of our trip to Sweden and Norway in 1998. We flew to Stockholm along with my Swedish mother and her new husband. After a few days in Stockholm, we took the train across Sweden to Oslo, Norway, stopping to track down ancestors along the way. From there it was the spectacular train ride across Norway to Bergen.

We enjoyed that beautiful town, taking a high speed boat up the coast, seeing fjords and fishing villages, before catching the railway back to Bergen.

However, there are a few periods in our life when nothing stands out. For example, the 1980s have proved to be kind of a blur; I would have to look at the pictures to jar my memories. That is one of the great values of photographs in books and albums, especially when we record dates and captions to allow memories of good times with family and friends to come flooding back.

Having spent most of my life as a photographer and operating photography businesses, I always tell people I hope they are documenting their lives, good times and bad, with photographs they can enjoy many years later. However,

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the images stored in our minds can be just as valuable, especially when they involve important human relationships we have enjoyed. I appreciate what the Bible has to say about this:

It is all about people. Many people devote their lives to the pursuit of goals and achievements, whether it involves professional advancement or acquisition of material things. But those all are fleeting. We can lose the “stuff” we possess, and even the most prestigious job opportunity is temporary. One day we will leave and be replaced by someone else. People – the meaningful relationships we establish with them – are things that will endure. *“Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life” (Isaiah 43:4).*

Investments we make in people pay eternal dividends. Accomplishments are forgotten and our possessions get old and wear out, but the positive contributions we make in the lives of others last forever. *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth” (3 John).*

Our “people impact” will sum up the impact of our lives. After commending his young protégé, Timothy, the apostle Paul told him, *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).* Later he declared, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).* The work he had been called to was done.

To his last breath, the apostle Paul’s focus was toward obedience to his God and service to the people God brought along throughout his journey through life. Those “pictures” were in his mind as he contemplated and evaluated the final moments of his life.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Thinking over the past year, what are the things you expect to still be remembering 20 years from now? What have been your most memorable moments?
2. Looking at it a different way, thinking back to 20 years ago, what are the memories that continue to linger with you today? Why do they seem so unforgettable?
3. Do you agree that relationships most often play an important part in our most cherished memories? Why or why not?
4. Whether you have been diligent to keep photographs of key moments in your life, or you have just retained those “pictures” in your mind, what are some of the highlights you would find in your life’s photo album? How many of those images, do you think, will last beyond your lifetime – perhaps even for eternity? Explain your answer.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Philippians 4:8-9; Timothy 3:10-11,14

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