

MONDAY MANNA
AUG 28, 2023**THE VALUE OF THE LONG VIEW OF LIFE**
By Stephen R. Graves

My son's basketball coach used to deliver a simple message: "Do not let high school basketball be the best thing or worst thing that has ever happened to you in your life. If it is, then we've failed as coaches." In other words – enjoy every minute of it, but make sure your significance, security, and success in life is bigger than those 1-3 years running up and down a court trying to get a round ball into a netted hoop.

A long view of life is essential for a flourishing life. Here are four reasons:

- 1. With the long view, we respond well to failure:** When we understand that life does not end when something bad happens, we realize we can make it through the shadows – we can flourish. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." If a man like Churchill, who faced greater challenges than most of us will ever encounter, could live with such a perspective, we too should be inspired to see past everyday troubles and realize that we flourish when we overcome.
- 2. With the long view, we respond well to success:** From a business perspective, success can become more dangerous than failure because we cease to grow. The long view says past success does not release me from the need to grow. More importantly, a long view of success allows us to drink in success with humility, realizing that our temporal gains, though sweet and worthy of celebration, are merely a drop in the bucket of life.
- 3. The long view helps us relax:** A long view of life is not just about persevering through struggles; it also helps us relax. When everything is not tied up in the present and immediate reactions, we become more accepting. Small slights and inconveniences carry less weight, and forgiveness comes more easily. This is critical for the flourishing life. Otherwise, we end up bitter old people.
- 4. The long view pushes us to think about our legacy:** While preparing for a talk, I was re-reading about William Wilberforce, Martin Luther, and St. Ignatius Loyola, among others. All of these leaders were sterling examples of heroic leadership and undoubtedly had a long view of life and impact. How will your impact remain after you are gone?

Taking the long view does not mean the immediate does not matter. Personal failures, systemic injustices and major tragedies are all real and painful; they stop us in our tracks and demand a response. But taking the long view in these moments allows us to say the story is not over (and that we are not the author).

In the book of Hebrews, the writer tells us about Abraham's great faith. "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him

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of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (11:8-10).

Abraham was able to live a transient kind of life for many years because he trusted God with his future, and because he believed in an ultimate vision and goal for his life – eternal life with the Creator God. This foundation incited his forward-looking perspective and emboldened his faith. It is amazing what we can accomplish and how far we are willing to travel with hearts secured in the hand of God.

Jesus Christ taught we should “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:20). That is taking the long view.

© 2023. Dr. Stephen R. Graves describes himself as an organizational strategist, pragmatic theologian, and social capitalist. He advises executives and business owners, as well as young entrepreneurs. He is author of numerous books and many articles, and a public speaker.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. In what way would you describe your perspective on life – is it short term, or are you typically able to take a long view on your life, your accomplishments, and your failures? Explain your answer.
2. How do you think a long view of life can enable us to cope with failure more effectively and profitably?
3. What about success – in your experience, does a long view of life also give a different perspective on successes we experience?
4. In the biblical examples given of Abraham and Jesus Christ, they spoke and demonstrated an unwavering confidence in the eternal impact of our faith and actions? How do you relate to this? How often do you stop to consider the potentially eternal impact of your decisions and actions you take?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 12:11,24, 21:5, 24:27,30-34, 27:18; Matthew 6:19-22, 7:24-27

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