

The Rhythm of Life: Living Every Day with Passion and Purpose (Kelly, Matthew)

Everything is a choice. This is life's greatest truth and its hardest lesson. It is a great truth because it reminds us of our power. Not power over others, but the often untapped power to be ourselves and to live the life we have imagined. It is a hard lesson, because it causes us to realize that we have chosen the life we are living right now. It is perhaps frightening for us to think that we have chosen to live our life exactly as it is today. Frightening because we may not like what we find when we look at our lives today. But it is also liberating, because we can now begin to choose what we will find when we look at our life in the tomorrows that lie un-lived before us.

Most people never fully accept this truth. They spend their lives arguing for their weaknesses, complaining about their lot in life, or blaming other people for their weaknesses and their lot in life.

For the day we accept that we have chosen to choose our choices is the day we cast off the shackles of victimhood and are set free to pursue the lives we were born to live. Learn to master the moment of decision and you will live a life uncommon.

“Wait for the man who makes you want to be a better person, a man who inspires you because he is always striving to better himself.

Have we become more interested in spectator sports and television sitcoms than in our own future?

—and all the time never stop to marvel at themselves and realize their infinite potential as human beings.

Certainly the young people of today have mastered the use of technology and are capable of solving complex scientific and mathematical problems, but who and what do these serve if they cannot think for themselves? If they have no understanding of the meaning and

purpose of their own lives? If they do not know who they are as individuals?

For the most part, we are too busy doing just about everything, that means just about nothing, to just about nobody, just about anywhere...and will mean even less to anyone a hundred years from now!

A great purposelessness has descended upon modern civilizations. People at large have lost any sense of the meaning and purpose of life; and without an understanding of our own purpose, there can be no true commitment.

Commitment and purpose go hand in hand.

Why do so many young people immerse themselves in video games, alcohol, promiscuous sex, deafeningly loud music, and drugs? Is it possible that they use these things to distract themselves from the frightening reality of facing a life without meaning and purpose? Or is it that they use these things in a vain and futile attempt to fill the void of meaninglessness within them?

These are the five questions that humanity longs to answer: 1. Who am I? 2. Where did I come from? 3. What am I here for? 4. How do I do it? 5. Where am I going?

Yet at the same time, it is only the ignorance of youth that believes experience is the only teacher.

As we grow wiser, we realize that life is too short to learn all of its lessons from personal experience, and we discover that other people, places, and times are all too willing to pass on the hard-earned wisdom of their experiences.

Our modern culture proclaims with all its force: What you do and what you have are the most important things. This is a lie. It is a deception that has led whole generations down the well-trodden path toward lives of quiet desperation. But it is a lie that is reinforced with such regularity that we have grown to believe it, at least subconsciously, and have shaped our lives around it.

The whole focus of our culture is on doing and having.

But this task-oriented approach completely ignores our need to connect the activities of our daily lives with our essential purpose.

Doing and having are natural, normal, and necessary aspects of our daily lives; the challenge is to do and have in accord with our essential purpose.

What I mean is, the happenings of our day-to-day lives can become episodic, one after another, like the episodes of a soap opera. In a soap opera, there is always something happening, but nothing ever really happens. In every episode there is drama—activity takes place, words are muttered, but nothing really happens. People abusing one another, people using one another, people talking about one another, people plotting and scheming, but nothing meaningful ever happens.

“That will be five thousand francs.” Surprised at the price, the woman objected, saying, “But Mr. Picasso, it took you only a few minutes.” Picasso smiled and replied, “No, my dear woman, you are mistaken, it took me a whole lifetime.”

The common reaction to this statement is to recall some negative or abusive event in our past and use it as an excuse for the person we are today. Such adoption of victimhood is one of the most destructive spirits at work in the human psyche in these modern times.

Victimhood denies the great truth that life is choices.

The point I am really trying to make here is that we are not a composite of everything that has ever happened to us, but rather what happens in our lives is almost always a result of those things we habitually think and those things we habitually do.

Life is the gathering of truth.

The meaning and purpose of life is for you to become the-best-version-of-yourself.

Our essential purpose is to become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

It is the quest to improve ourselves, to be all we are capable of being, to test our limits, and to grow steadily toward the-best-version-of-ourselves that brings meaning to our lives.

There is purpose and meaning to life. You were born to become the-best-version-of-yourself. In the words of Robert Louis Steven-son, “To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.”

Embrace this one solitary truth—you were born to become the-best-version-of-yourself—and it will change your life more than anything you have ever learned.

Discovering my essential purpose has caused me to realize that happiness is an inside-out job. All too often, what is going on around us is only a reflection of what is going on within us.

The First Dream I have a dream for you... that you have complete control over your mental and physical faculties and that you are slave neither to food, nor drink, nor any other substance. I dream that you will be free, that you will have freedom in the truest sense of the word—the strength of character to do what is right in each situation. The Second Dream I have a dream for you... that you are able to discern the people, activities, and possessions that are most important to you. And that you are able to give each of them their time and place according to their appropriate priority. The Third Dream I have a dream for you...

that you have the courage, determination, firmness, and persistence to perform the tasks that you choose, decide, and resolve to perform. That you perform them with a commitment to excellence and attention to detail. The Fourth Dream I have a dream for you... that you discover a unique talent that leads you to dedicate the professional aspect of your life to some work you can be passionate about. I dream that you may enjoy the rare privilege of spending your days in meaningful work. That you serve your neighbor, your family, and your community in this occupation and that by it, you are able to provide for your temporal needs. The Fifth Dream I have a dream for you... that you grow in wealth in every sense of the word, that you are never in need, and that whatever your wealth is, you share it with all you can. The Sixth Dream I have a dream for you... that you find true love. Someone you can cherish. Someone who makes you want to be a better person. A soul-mate who can challenge you and love you. A companion who can walk with you, know you, share your joy, perceive your pain and heartache, and comfort you in your disappointments. The Seventh Dream I have a dream for you... that you discover a deep and abiding interior peace. The peace that comes from knowing that who you are, where you are, and what you do is essentially good and makes sense; that you are contributing to the happiness of others; and that you are progressing toward becoming the-best-version-of-yourself.

You cannot live without dreams. Dreams foster hope, and hope is one of the forces by which men and women live.

To dream is the easiest thing in the world. There are no limitations to dreaming. But as we grow we experience pain, failure, criticism, and disappointment, and we gradually limit our dreams. We seek to live in the comfort zone. There is no such thing. It is much more difficult to try to live in a comfort zone than it is to follow our dreams, because the comfort zone is only an illusion, but our dreams are real. Will you spend the rest of your life chasing an illusion or following your dreams?

“What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?”

Michelangelo, the great Renaissance artist and poet, knew the value, power, and need for dreams when he wrote, "The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

Let us live every day in the counsel of Thoreau: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined."

Each tombstone tells a story. Some of the people were laid to rest last year, others a hundred years ago. Some of them lived for ninety-five years, others for twenty-five years. But I can hear all of them calling out to me in unison, sharing with me a message: "Life is short. Do not waste your life. Live life passionately."

Regret over things done can be eased over time. Regret over things left unsaid and undone is inconsolable.

Don't allow fear to paralyze you. As Goethe wrote, "Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid."

Life is short, and you are dead an awfully long time. Live life passionately.

Take a moment to think about it. When was the last time you obeyed that gentle voice within you and it made you miserable? When was the last time the gentle voice within led you to become a lesser-version-of-yourself? It may lead you to the pain of discipline and self-sacrifice, but always in the quest to help you embrace more fully the best-version-of-yourself.

The question is, are you satisfied being in the habit of surviving, or are you ready to get into the habit of thriving?

The first step in our quest to become the-best-version-of-ourselves is to define our legitimate needs. The second step is to create a lifestyle that fulfills those legitimate needs.

I guess the question becomes, how much do you value your own body? Most people wait until they get cancer or have a heart attack before they remember that they have bodies.

Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and regular sleep are three of the easiest ways to increase our passion, energy, and enthusiasm for life.

If you are dedicated to your essential purpose, the people you will want to surround yourself with are people who inspire and challenge you to become the-best-version-of-yourself.

The people we surround ourselves with either raise or lower our standards. They either help us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves or encourage us to become lesser versions of ourselves. We become like our friends. No man becomes great on his own. No woman becomes great on her own. The people around them help to make them great.

“When others make mistakes, are we quick to judge and ridicule, or do we acknowledge it as a learning experience and part of their journey?”

The reason we neglect most of our legitimate needs is that they require our rarest resources: time and energy. Relationships are no different.

Quality time is now the discredited fantasy of an age that wanted more of everything except the things that really mattered.

All of life’s important relationships thrive under the condition of carefree timelessness.

The ideas we feed our mind today tend to form our lives tomorrow.

Think of it in this way: We become the stories we listen to. It doesn't matter if we get those stories from movies, music, television, newspapers, magazines, politicians, friends, or books—the stories we listen to form our lives.

Learning, like so many other aspects of modern living, has been violently disconnected from our essential purpose.

Wisdom writings constantly hold before us a vision of the-best-version-of-ourselves.

It is also in silence and solitude that life's preeminent challenge is proposed to us. Brother Silence and Sister Solitude unveil the person we are today with all our strengths and weaknesses, but they also remind us of the better person we know we can be.

In the silence, we see at one time the person we are now and the person we are capable of becoming. In seeing these two visions at one time, we are automatically challenged to change and grow and become the-best-version-of-ourselves. It is precisely for this reason that we fill our lives with noise, to distract ourselves from the challenge to change.

We use all of our time, effort, and energy in the pursuit of our illegitimate wants, hypnotized by the lie that our illegitimate wants are the key to our happiness.

The difference between our wants and our deepest desires is meaning.

Our deepest desires are things we want because we know they will help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

These are the deepest desires of our hearts. They are good because in them we hope to better ourselves, the world in which we live, and others. They are the deepest desires of our hearts because their fulfillment leads us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves, and every being yearns to become all it is capable of being.

We don't find our meaning and purpose in pleasure. The modern world proposes pleasure as the road to happiness. But wherever you find men and women who ascribe to the hedonistic view that pleasure is to be sought for its own sake at every available moment, you find people who are overcome with laziness, lustfulness, and gluttony. They are not free or happy. They are enslaved by a thousand different addictions, and the end produced by their philosophy is not pleasure, but despair.

Life is not simply about the selfish pursuit of the-best-version-of-ourselves. Rather, the more we contribute to helping others become the-best-version-of-themselves, the more progress we make in the attainment of our essential purpose.

Albert Einstein wrote, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

The question I have for you at this part of our journey together is, "What is your genius?"

And if you and I can get even the tiniest taste of that peace—the peace that comes from knowing that who we are, where we are, and what we are doing makes sense regardless of the outcome or other people's opinions—then we have discovered our genius.

How will you know when you discover your genius? There are two signs: joy and a feeling of timelessness. When I speak and when I write, the hours pass without notice. This is not work, it is passion. Is it always like that? No, of course not. There are times when to squeeze a single coherent paragraph from my mind takes hours and hours. But when I experience the joy and the timelessness of sharing these ideas, I know that I was born to share these ideas as a fish was created to swim or a bird to fly.

The challenge for each of us is to create a lifestyle that will allow our needs, desires, and talents to live in harmony. This dynamic collaboration is the key to living life to the fullest and becoming the best-version-of-ourselves.

As the number of experts in our lives increases, our ability to reason and make healthy decisions for ourselves seems to diminish.

We stop listening to the voice of conscience and begin to seek out the opinions of the many other voices that distract us from the voice within. As a result, one of the real dilemmas that people face every day is the inability to look at a given situation and decide which is the best way to act.

Before we make a decision, particularly a large one (or before we give advice to assist someone else in making a decision), it is wise for each of us to take time in the classroom of silence to listen to the gentle voice within.

Most people don't know what they want. Most people don't know who they are. Most people don't know who they are capable of becoming.

In any depth, beyond a little more money, a new car, and the vacation of a lifetime, do you know a lot of people who really know what they want from life? Do you know a lot of people who know what they want for themselves? How many people do you know who are intimately aware of and in tune with their legitimate needs? Do you know many people who are connected to the deeper desires of their hearts? Would you say most people know what their genius is and are using it as a guiding principle in their lives? Finally, do you think many people have a clear vision of what the-best-version-of-themselves looks like?

These are tremendous disabilities. When we don't know who we are, what we want, or where we are going and why, we are very susceptible to becoming pawns in other people's schemes.

In his classic poem "The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost describes coming to a fork in the road and having to choose between the two paths that lie before him. The poem closes with one of the most famous lines of modern literature: "I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

Success contributes to our happiness only inasmuch as it helps us become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

Physical pleasure is fleeting and when detached from our essential purpose leaves emptiness as its aftermath.

Physical pleasure creates lasting happiness in our lives only when it helps us become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

Our conception of happiness is often fatally flawed by the belief that fun equals happiness. Don't get me wrong; I'm not suggesting you should spend your life avoiding fun. Fun is an important part of a healthy and happy life. But fun for fun's sake rarely leads to any type of lasting happiness. The challenge is to learn to have fun doing the things that matter most.

There is only one question: Will what you are about to do help you become the-best-version-of-yourself? If the answer to that question is "Yes," do it without hesitation.

The journey of the soul is difficult. Life is difficult. It is those who imagine that life is easy or should be easy who end up the unhappiest.

Genius is the ability to capture complexity with a simple vision. Simplicity is the key to perfection. Embrace this simple vision and it will help you unveil and celebrate your genius.

Happiness eludes all those who seek it for its own sake. True happiness is the by-product of the journey.

So, in the philosophical sense of being, as a person you consist not only of who you are now, but also of who you are capable of becoming at any moment in the future.

Consciously or subconsciously, the minimalist is always asking, "What is the least I can do?" Minimalism is a mind-set, a habit of the mind that can affect any area of our lives.

The minimalist wants the fruit of a certain toil but does not want to toil.

Minimalism breeds mediocrity. It is the destroyer of passion. Minimalism is one of the greatest character diseases of our time. It is the enemy of excellence and a cancer on society. The problem is, culturally we encourage minimalism.

We do not teach our children the love of learning. We do not hold knowledge before them as a powerful tool for personal development.

Minimalism is born from a lack of passion for the things we do. Wherever you find people doing things that they are not passionate about, you will find minimalism.

The minimalist suffers from dreadfully low self-esteem. His low self-esteem is not the result of failure, but the consequence of not even trying. The minimalist doesn't strive to excel; he strives to survive. The minimalist forgets that it takes just as much energy to avoid excellence as it does to achieve excellence. A person gripped by the mind-set of minimalism becomes very self-seeking and contributes little to the common good of his community or society.

Do not ask, "What is the least I can do?"; rather, in every situation, ask yourself, "What is the most I can do?" If you are willing, this one question will introduce you to your better self and change your life forever.

Freedom is viewed as the power, the strength, or merely the convenience to choose. This notion is false.

Self-discipline is the foundation of freedom. This self-discipline, this mastery of self, is acquired only by the practice of self-denial and is acquired always from within. Discipline can never be imposed upon a person; it must emerge from within a person. Self-discipline is the foundation of greatness, achievement, success, heroism, leadership, sanctity, and vibrant and flourishing

In 1838, with a prophetic voice, Abraham Lincoln said, "At what point is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we ourselves must be its author and finisher. As a nation of free men, we must live through all times, or die by suicide."

On another occasion Lincoln said, "Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit, and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors."

The people of these modern times have become slaves to alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, gambling, sex, violence, shopping...Our slavery is the result of a complex of addictions that we often refuse to acknowledge or challenge. These addictions attack and take over not only our bodies, but also our minds, hearts, spirits, and checkbooks.

The foundation of great nations is freedom. The foundation of freedom is not strength, but character. The foundation of character is discipline.

The moral decay of our modern Western culture began when we put aside self-discipline, when we stopped expecting it of ourselves, and when we failed the tests of friendship, parenthood, and leadership and stopped expecting it of the people around us.

From time to time, we all have to wrestle with different things. What are you wrestling with? You had better get rid of it, or it is going to get rid of you.

Wisdom is not the amassing of knowledge. Wisdom is truth lived.

The details are simply that, the details. It is this process of growth that makes life interesting, exciting, rewarding, and fulfilling. Dedication to this process of growth is greatness. Greatness should never be confused with fame, fortune, status, or power. These are only passing illusions. Greatness is to become more fully your self with each passing day.

We become the stories we listen to, read, and tell. That is the power of a story.

We all want to be loved and accepted. The danger that emerges from this desire is that we may fall into the trap of doing or saying things just to please others

In truth, nobody is loved by everybody. Even the greatest men and women in history have critics. Even people who have dedicated themselves and their lives selflessly to assist others have critics and detractors. You are no different.

The spirit by which they lived should be imitated, but you have your own path to walk and your own star to follow.

There is more to life than getting, grabbing, having, and receiving. Life is as much about giving as it is about receiving. Learn to give the one gift that you were born to give—yourself. The meaning of life is mysteriously revealed in this act. There is no faster way to happen upon the purpose of your life than to embrace life's daily opportunities to serve those around you.

Every time-saving device is available to us, and still no one has time.

Even as a child I learned quickly that from the moment we are born into this life and placed on this planet, there is more to do than can ever be done, more to see than can ever be seen, and if something is important, we must make time.

That is the greatness of the human spirit—making the unknown known, making the impossible possible. Small victories, one upon another, are the making of every great champion.

One thing is certain. If you do only what you feel like doing, your life will be miserable and you will be a failure.

We sleep to be renewed. Sleep refreshes us. Sleep energizes us. Our sleep brings rest, renewal, and energy not only to our bodies, but also to our hearts, minds, and spirits. Sleep heals us from the stresses of daily life. When we view it from this very positive perspective, and consciously approach it with these things in mind, we maximize the effects of sleep.

That is why we live in a world terrified of silence and full of people dedicated to imitating other people instead of developing the unique individual that they are themselves.

Would the same idea work for a young man who wanted to become the greatest basketball player in history? Michael Jordan once said, “I visualized where I wanted to be, what kind of player I wanted to become. I knew exactly where I wanted to go, and I focused on getting there.”

Is it merely a coincidence that, in this age marked by its rejection of religion and spirituality, the incidence of depression and mental illness has escalated so dramatically?

The philosophical foundation of the lifestyles celebrated by the modern media screams out, “Life is about what you have and what you do.” Pleasure, possessions, and power are the three pillars of this philosophy. The emphasis is on having and doing rather than on becoming. The truth is, what you become is infinitely more important than what you do or what you have.

The Oxford Dictionary defines success as “the accomplishment of an aim; favorable outcome; or, the attainment of wealth, fame, or position.” If this is what success is, please, please tell me there is more to life than success. Or tell me that success is something else, something more.

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s definition of success is perhaps the most famed. He wrote, “To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.”

Chance? Luck? I don’t think so. Passion. Discipline. Perseverance. Commitment.

Success is not just an achievement, it is a contribution.

Truly successful people have character. Part of that character is an unwavering commitment to excellence. They know the art of discipline. Successful people just have better habits than the rest. You are your habits.

Passion. They are passionate about what they do. Belief. They believe in what they do. Commitment. They are committed to what they do. Courage. In the face of situations where other people would lose heart, they take heart. Perseverance. Through the discouragement of failure, rejection, and criticism, they persevere and keep at it, always staying focused on their goal and dream.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared with what lies within us.” Shakespeare counseled, “To thine own self be true.” Socrates advised, “Know thyself.”

Who you become is infinitely more important than what you do or what you have.

This was Albert Einstein's reflection: "There are two ways to live life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

These are some of the lessons I have learned: Let others talk. Avoid arguments. Don't complain. Give honest and sincere compliments. Be more ready to compliment than to criticize. Invite input. Make a point to remember people's names; it is music to their ears. Never be afraid to seek advice. Never criticize someone in front of other people. Be aware of other people's desires. Find joy and pleasure through taking an interest in people. Talk about yourself only if asked. Smile—it is contagious and opens people's hearts. Learn to listen. Remember people's birthdays and anniversaries—it shows you care. Encourage people to share about themselves. Engage people where they are—talk in relation to their interests. Help other people to discover their uniqueness, to feel special and important, without patronizing them. Respect other people's opinions. Admit when you are wrong. Be kind and friendly to every person you meet. Ask questions people respond to positively. Encourage other people in their dreams—particularly children. Try to see it from the other person's point of view. Hold up ideals. Challenge people gently. Talk about your own failures. Appeal to higher motives. Always look for yourself in others and others in yourself—it affirms the oneness of the human family. Affirm the highest values of the human spirit. Never pass up an opportunity to speak a kind word of appreciation. There are 6 billion people on the planet, and 5.9 billion of them go to bed every night starving for one honest word of appreciation. 10.

Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad. It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today.

These are the five signs of a declining civilization: a dramatic increase in sexual promiscuity; the political undermining and disintegration of family values; the cultural destruction of the family unit; the killing of the innocent; and a radical increase in nonwar-fare violence. These signs have played a major role in the decline and collapse of every civilization in recorded history.

This is the way I see it. Life comes down to two simple realities. People were made to be loved, and things were made to be used. Your problems, my problems, and indeed all the world's problems come from our misunderstanding of these two simple principles. You see...we love things and we use people.

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. LOVE THEM ANYWAY. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. DO GOOD ANYWAY. If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. SUCCEED ANYWAY. The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow. DO GOOD ANYWAY. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. BE HONEST AND FRANK ANYWAY. Big people with even bigger ideas will be shot down by small people with even smaller minds. THINK BIG ANYWAY. People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. BE THE UNDERDOG ANYWAY. What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight. BUILD ANYWAY. People really need help but may attack you if you help them. HELP THEM ANYWAY. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU'VE GOT ANYWAY. The Measure of Your Life Will Be the Measure of Your Courage Everything in life requires courage.