



# PERSPECTIVES

by Rinaldo S. Brutoco



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## A Life Worth Living

WOW! It's yet another week of rising Covid numbers as the country lurches forward and backward without any Federal leadership. This limbo period feels like it may never end. Well, in the dynamic context of conflicting realities of life and death, of abundance and growing homelessness, I'm writing today about living a meaningful life.

Possibly because of Covid-19, or because we are experiencing the passage of time, many of us are thinking about our lives, of our personal journey on this planet, and want to be remembered by those we leave behind. Many younger people are also stopping to reflect on how meaningful their lives are at this stage.

You may have heard the Socratic observation, "An unexamined life is not worth living." We all know Socrates chose death over exile from his students and denying his passionate quest for the truth. That approach was too risky for the Athenians, so they sentenced him to die by drinking hemlock. In modern times the "unexamined life" sentiment raises a host of related meanings. For me, the phrase conveys a sense of living in an unconscious or routinized state of mind. It describes the choice between accepting, without question, the rules, the stereotypes, and the traditions handed down from your parents, your elders, and your culture; or, instead, asking if those same values are truly independently valid beliefs for you! Here's an idea, what if you sought to create a life of meaning based on your inner values and principles? What would you think? What would you be free to do? What would you become untethered from historical convention and steered, like the rudder of a ship, by only what you personally discovered to be true for you? One of the definitions I like to share is: "Integrity is when you live the truth you know, not the truth I know, but the truth you know." Living an "examined" life will provide us greater clarity for ourselves concerning what we did come to find as true, and to commit to leave that wisdom behind for future generations.

All lives are worth living – some are just more conscious and self-aware than others. Fortunately, it's never too late to start living that life. It's never too early or too late to begin creating the life we want by crafting our own unique story. Wisdom tells us it is better to intend the future we want by reflecting on the past with the wisdom of our years and recording those reflections while we can. Then, whether we transition off this planet shortly thereafter, or "live to be 100," we will have begun to create our lives by having "examined" it in the crucible of our own experience.

Last week on Solutions News, the World Business Academy's weekly podcast, I had the honor of interviewing local filmmaker Kate Carter about Life Chronicles, the nonprofit she founded in 1998. Her work over the past 22 years has helped thousands of families cope with impending loss by recording life stories, or "chronicles" that capture the essence and being of the person who facing illness or an end of life situation. Even if the illness is

conquered, and the person lives for many more decades, the process of reflecting on what's most important has tremendous positive effects for all participants in the filming sessions. This is the magic of Kate Carter's work.

There is an old axiom that "The best way to predict the future is to create it." So, no matter your current health condition, age, degree of infirmity, or relationships, we can all benefit from taking a moment to contemplate our own life chronicle. I know I have personally contrasted the question of what I "wanted" (which is always a distracting question) with what I heard from my quiet, still, inner voice telling me what I was called to do by asking this simple question: How Can I Serve? I learned many years ago that keeping that question foremost in my mind allows me to seek greater self-awareness and greater commitment to my personal path of meaning.

Living unconsciously from day to day leaves us at the end of our lives having experienced many sunrises and sunsets, but never having experienced the rebirth inherent in each of those sunrises, nor the wisdom of the night from each sunset. Living consciously means more than just having goals. It means picking the goals carefully and choosing those that are most aligned with the unique experience that is you, at this unique time in history, at this particular juncture on the space time continuum. Pursuing your unique goals gives direction to your life. And the goals you pick uniquely informs you of who you really are and what really matters most to you. You arise above merely living from day to day. One of life's greatest tragedies is when someone is on their death bed and is crying out for a little more time. No one has ever been heard on their deathbed begging for just a few more days to work in the office. Yet most everyone does yearn for more time with their loved ones at that particularly vulnerable point of our human journey.

That, to me, is the most important concept behind wanting to make your life meaningful: it's the knowledge that we can feel "complete" with the story we lived so the story we share at the end of our days will inspire as well as inform and leave us feeling "complete" as we exit.

At this time of coronavirus, when we feel like we're victimized by what we cannot do and all the ways we cannot interact, it's easy to forget that we're still breathing, we're still alive, and we're still capable of making a difference. If we choose to make that difference, the difference we've made is what we will then reflect back in the latter chapters of our lives with gratitude and joy. Personally, I want to do more than just "sleep walk" through this life and actually leave a legacy of the meaning we created for ourselves. And, if we record our lives with Life Chronicles in our "Golden Years," the "meaning" that our reflections contain may be able to assist others to create their own meaningful lives. Because, one way or another, you will be remembered, so why not live a life worthy of the opportunity?