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# When Dying ...

To everything there is a season,

A time for every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born,

And a time to die; Ecclesiastes 3

We, as humans, live with the knowledge that one day we will die.

Maybe I am thinking about this since I am about to have my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Now I am not planning to die anytime soon, but I am beginning to live with the realization that I am aging. I must admit it is bothering me a little. I have told all my friends and family that there better not be any black balloons at my birthday party. I may be aging, but I am not dying and I do not want to cry at my party.

Some of my family and friends have been asking me what I'd like to receive as a gift on this special birthday. When my daughter-in-law asked what I wanted, I gave her the name of an anti-aging cream!

I don't think of myself as, well, older. In some ways, I still think I am that invincible teenager who could fearlessly climb to the top of a cheerleading pyramid. Surely I am still that young girl who woke up at 6 a.m. ready to conquer the day and needing no coffee to do so.

But I have come to accept, reluctantly, that my body is aging. I have joints that ache, mostly from jumping off pyramids! And my body says that it would have been much wiser to have taken better care of it before now.

It is difficult to live with the realization that everyone eventually dies when you are very young. But as we age, we begin to have this understanding that are bodies are temporal, and yet we believe and know that we are more than just a physical body. We are body, soul, and spirit.

So as I find myself about to turn 50, I also find that my "inner person" is becoming more alive, more understanding, more fulfilled, more confident. I recently read an interesting study from a group of sociologists at the University of Chicago which found that senior adults are more content than any other age group – despite their aches, pains, and accumulated losses. The study stated that the odds of being happy increased 5 percent with every 10 years of age.

I noticed this recently at our church. We had a class on ballroom dancing. It was beautiful to see those who are slightly my senior having so much fun as we ventured out from ballroom dancing to the Electric Slide. I could just sense their confidence in themselves. Despite a few aching joints, they went for it! And they went for the Cupid Shuffle, and the Swing, and anything else that was thrown at them. At times we laughed until tears ran down our cheeks, and I could sense the joy and contentment in my older friends.

So even though I am **not** a senior adult, and I refuse to accept any of those senior adult discounts, I find a sense of being content in my own skin at 50 that I didn't have at 30. (Suddenly I am finding a new confidence in Dillard's department store. They have an ad that plays over the sound system declaring, "Did you know that 50 is the new 30?") I find that I am less concerned about what others think and more at peace with my own heart. I find that as I realize there is a time to die, I long to make a difference in the days I live. People are more important than things, and enjoying the present moment is easier. I realize, in a new way, that my life is about my relationships with God, others, and myself.

I am living more with purpose in mind. As the puzzle pieces of life snap together, I see the picture more clearly. I take more time for enjoying people and less for work.

I guess I am growing up. My dreams are less about success and more about living. I am planning new things, like going to Thailand to help with the work in ministering to young girls who have been sold into the sex slave market. I am less content to live for less than something purposeful.

Because there is a time to die, I want my life to count.

I have been gripped recently by the thought that when I die and my life is reflected upon by others (hopefully!), what would I want that to look like? If I live with dying in mind, how would that change the way I live? If I could write my own epitaph, what would I say? And could I live that epitaph?

So as a challenge to myself and as a way to set my mark on my goal, here is what I would want it to say.

***She loved well***

***And lived fully***

***She never ceased to grow emotionally, mentally, and spiritually***

***Although she has now changed worlds,***

***Before she left she changed us***

***By learning to live in peace***

***And purpose***

***With integrity***

***And courage***

***Regrets, imperfections, pain, and failure***

***Led her to live in grace and love, mercy and kindness***

***As she lived learning to love herself and others***

***With the love which now has transformed her to heaven***

***Where she is completely free and fully alive***

So if I can write my epitaph (It will have to be a big tombstone; you know I don't write short stories!), I pray I can learn to live it. Okay, I admit that I have an issue with control but I release my family ahead of time from any real expectation of using my pre-written epitaph.

What would you want your epitaph to say? Perhaps some of you will take the time to write your own epitaph and set your mark on living it as well.

You can also find this article published on [When Dying....](#), and on the tag pages [a epitaph](#), [death](#), [death christians](#), [death:s embrace](#), [Ecclesiastes 3](#), [Ecclesiastes 3 2](#), [Ecclesiastes chapter 3](#), [embrace death](#), [life](#), [my epitaph](#)

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