

## Some advice in the marathon of life!

by Mark Pavilons

I'm just thankful for everything, all the blessings in my life ... I think that's the best way to start your day and finish your day. It keeps everything in perspective.?

? Tim Tebow

It's been said you will know when you get there.

Get where?? Just how do I know where I'm going and what do I do when I get there? Am I there already?

We make so many choices in our lives, it's hard to keep track of them all. We navigate twists, turns and forks in the road. Heck, sometimes we end up in the ditch and roll down an embankment.

It may not seem like a journey, but our lives are the longest, most intense adventures we will ever undertake. It's a wonder we even make it out in one piece.

Everyone's path is entirely different, since we are all unique. The phrase, 'the one and only' applies to each of us.

Some get there early, and like to wait in the lounge. Others run down the hallway, boarding pass in hand, and just make it. And there are those who miss the first flight entirely, but catch the second, or the third.

Many people say it's the actual odyssey that's the fun part, not the ultimate destination. Maybe it's a little of both.

I don't really recall all of my minor choices that led me down my path. I was average, growing up in rural Caledon to hard-working European parents. I went to college.

I met my wife, we bonded and became good friends. Then we got married, travelled and settled down to have children. While each child's arrival is a bit blurry in my mind, Kim can recall every moment with a mother's clarity. I can't clearly remember their first words or first steps, but they are now young adults, interesting human beings embarking on their own quests. Their journeys all converged to this point in time.

There were many bumps and bruises along the way, but I think their sojourns, from here on in, will be most exciting. The world is an oyster, they say. What if you don't like oysters?

Our ultimate 'pearls' may include joy, wisdom, accomplishments, travel, enlightenment and the age-old staples of marriage and children.

While these voyages may seem similar, each is exclusive. And given today's hurdles, challenges and obstacles, none will be simple or straightforward. But that's not to say they won't be a blast. I say get some good hiking shoes and explore!

I know some may find it hard to believe, but I'm not perfect. Nevertheless, I have tried to be there for my kids, teach them, guide them, laugh with them. I may not be the best role model, but hey, they could have had worse. I provide. And I try to challenge their minds.

At this stage of my wagon ride through the old west, this cowboy ain't thinking about leaving a legacy. It's not my thing. My children don't belong to me and once they assert their individuality to the fullest, they will lead their own wagon trains to unexplored

destinations. They will leave the homestead. I hope they learned from dad how to make a good chili.

I am hoping to witness their travels and be part of their life stories.

Regardless of which path they choose, I'm as proud as a peacock. I'm not sure what really led Kim and I on the parenting track, but our three human beings are our gifts to humanity.

Perhaps society will thank us one day.

Maybe they'll marry, maybe they won't. Maybe they'll dance at their 60th wedding anniversaries with their children.

In the wise words of Baz Luhrmann, sing, stretch and read the directions, even if you don't choose to follow them!

Choices, according to some, are half chance. Worrying won't get you anywhere, trust me on this one. Real troubles tend to blindside you.

I think we all need to take advice and receive help at certain points of our lives. Everyone has advice to give, but it's one of the most recyclable things we have. Many wise tidbits are good ones, worth repeating.

I'm not talking about touching a hot stove or sticking your tongue on a pole in the winter. These are lessons best learned by doing.

Unfortunately, our sage advice often falls on deaf ears. I'm sure my dad tried to impart some of his learned experiences, but I can't recall any of them.

I found an old black and white photo of him as a young man. It now sits on my dresser. Even though we weren't best buds, I do miss him sometimes.

My mom was always there for constant support and love.

They were unique. They started me on my own journey.

I'd like to think I have amassed a couple of fragments of insight along the way.

Here's some of mine, for those embarking on their own tour of the world.

Love your siblings and parents ? you don't know how truly valuable they are until they're gone. You will miss them.

Enjoy your youth because one day you will look back at your old photos. Your reaction ??miling or frowning ? depends on you.

In life's marathon, at some points you will be ahead, at others far behind. It's a very long trek and often your only opponent is yourself.

The long and winding road is long, my friends, and may even continue after we leave terra firma.

If you choose to keep your eye on the prize, look back once in a while, and feel blessed by what you have.

It's the greatest feeling in the world.