

## **Meaning To My Days**

If you have received this newsletter since the early issues you know that I will on occasion venture out a bit from purely money focused subjects. For years now I have been meaning to read Dr. Viktor E. Frankl's book "*Man's Search for Meaning*". It is a bit of a dark read in that Viktor's book is about his observations and experiences as an Austrian Jew during his internment in the German concentration camp at Auschwitz. Still, there is wonderful inspiration to be taken from the work and much to learn that can help each of us get more from life.

### **The Importance of Purpose**

One of the clear messages that the author conveys about the survivors of these extreme conditions is that those who survived had a clear reason to do so. When the author, a doctor and scientist, was sent to the camp he had notes for what amounted to his life's work on a roll of paper, which was confiscated. His desire to recreate that work, to see his wife again and to teach people the insights he gained in those awful years provided significant purpose and reasons for him to live.

The author quotes Friedrich Nietzsche: "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how". We all experience difficulties and the point here is to develop a very strong "why" or purpose in life. Many people have lost jobs in the past few years and it is difficult in this economy to find work. Careers used to take straight paths and sometimes offer 40+ years of employment. These days are different and most people I know have experienced a more winding career path. Perhaps there is some wisdom in creating a compelling "why" in life. People successful in their careers are often very clear about their purpose.

### **The Importance of Vision**

Viktor is very detailed in his description of the conditions under which he and the other prisoners lived in the camps, yet he writes in a more matter of fact than judgmental way. The natural question is how could anyone endure this? We have mentioned purpose and that was successfully combined by survivors with a vision of the future. If the focus was on the intense difficulties of the day, that could easily have overwhelmed the person. If their view however was focused on what life would look like after their release and how to make it through to that point, this vision helped them persevere to that end. Forward and being forward thinking seems to be a winning direction in life!

How about you? What vision of the future is carrying you through the challenges you face in your days? What building blocks are you putting in place for the life you would like to live?

### **The Importance of Gratitude/Appreciation**

As I was reading the book and taking in Frankl's perspectives, one of the great surprises was the observation of things the prisoners were thankful for, even in the midst of extreme hardship. They had gratitude for things such as a beautiful sunset, the occasional sharing of songs, poems and jokes, a scoop from the bottom of the soup pot, or the smallest of mercies they might know in a day.

Over the years of helping people with their finances and their investments, the people who have this gift of gratitude/appreciation for what they have, always seem to be the people with the greatest sense of happiness and fulfillment. Conversely, those who are never quite satisfied also seem to be those with more financial challenges. There is wisdom in cultivating the art of appreciation.

### **The Importance of Faith**

One of the more striking observations for me in Viktor's book was the profound difference that a depth and vigor of religious belief made in the survival and behaviors of the prisoners. The deeper the difficulties experienced by an individual, the greater the support faith offered to that person. That someone was not forgotten or separated from a loving God, no matter what the earthly circumstance, made a striking difference from the author's point of view.

It is interesting, in my own observation, how linked gratitude and appreciation are with strength of faith. Often those who have faith naturally develop gratitude and appreciation, which are great tools to success in financial planning. These people also seem to understand the term "enough" in ways that sometimes eludes others.

### **Bottom Line**

Each of us will take in stories and the lessons they offer in order to improve ourselves and our lives. The triumph of Viktor Frankl is such a story, because the man found great insight and wisdom in the horrors of the holocaust. We can all benefit from his inspiration by adding purpose, vision, appreciation/gratitude and faith to our lives. If "life planning" at this depth is of interest to you, let's visit some time soon.

## **Your Feedback**

I would love feedback on this newsletter. Future issues may include a host of good ideas, insights, specific steps to take financially, life insights and of course "Wit and Wisdom". Most importantly, I'd like it to be of value to you and to encourage an exchange of great ideas and insights. Please send your feedback to:

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