



Rich in Years

Finding Peace and Purpose in a Long Life

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Chapter One: Introduction

1. What does the front cover evoke in your mind? What feelings do you have when you look at it?
2. How does the title, **Rich in Years**, strike you? What do you think the author is trying to convey through it?
3. In looking at the table of contents, what chapter title intrigues you most? Why?
4. In the Introduction, Arnold uses the metaphor of hiking to describe life's journey. How would you describe the journey you are on right now?

Chapter Two: Growing Older

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase "growing older"? Why?
2. How do you react to Ellen's statement "These are the best years of my life" (p. 4)?
3. Why do you think people fear growing older? What fears do you have?
4. In what ways has our society lost perspective on growing old?
5. Eileen mentions two temptations in growing older (p. 10). Can you think of any others?
6. Arnold states that growing older can be a gift (p. 11). How so?

Chapter Three: Accepting Changes

1. What changes have you personally found difficult to accept in growing older?
2. All of us have regrets. What are some of yours? How does Arnold suggest we deal with them?
3. In thinking back over your life, what are some things you can be truly thankful for?

4. How does Arnold suggest we use our retirement years? Why?
5. Alice von Hildebrand says, "We are made for joy." What things keep you from experiencing joy?

Chapter Four: Combatting Loneliness

1. Everyone has to deal with loneliness at times. When are you most lonely? Why?
2. What does Arnold suggest we do to combat loneliness? What shouldn't we do?
3. All of us worry about being a burden on others. Why? How does Arnold help us to think differently about dependence?
4. What has encouraged you most from reading this chapter?

Chapter Five: Finding Purpose

1. Do you ever think about what your purpose in life really is? If so, how would you describe it? Have you lived according to it?
2. From what Arnold writes, what does God's purpose for our lives involve?
3. Do you know a child or young person whom you could reach out to? Who?
4. Of the stories shared in this chapter, which one do you find most inspiring? Why?
5. Arnold suggests that the quality of our lives can deepen even as our time here on earth shortens. How so?

Chapter Six: Keeping Faith

1. What kind of suffering do you fear most? Why?
2. Have you ever experienced the "blessing" in having to suffer? How so?
3. What do you feel about the notion behind "death with dignity"? What reasons do people give in favor of physician-assisted suicide? What are your thoughts about this issue? What does Arnold think about it?
4. When sick, do you turn first to medical professionals, or to God?
5. Do you think our lives have been over-medicalized? How so?
6. Have you spoken with your family about your end-of-life wishes? If not, why not? Why is it important to do so?

Chapter Seven: Living with Dementia

1. What do you fear most about the "breaking down of your mind"?
2. What experience have you had with dementia?
3. Arnold offers a few new twists on the subject of mental deterioration. What are some positive aspects of Alzheimer's?
4. Do you know families that include an older member suffering dementia? How might you help support them?
5. What do you find most encouraging after reading this chapter?

Chapter Eight: Moving Forward

1. If you were diagnosed with serious cancer, would you "fight it" or "let go"? Why?
2. Arnold suggests that "letting go" does not necessarily mean "giving up." What's the difference?
3. How might refusing to let go keep one from experiencing the fullness of living?
4. What makes it difficult for you personally to let go or accept your limitations?
5. In the end, what is the key to letting go?
6. Arnold says that "it actually doesn't matter how long we live" (p. 95). Why?

Chapter Nine: Finding Peace

1. From what Arnold writes, how does one find peace? Are there other things that can help one to find peace?
2. Are there any specific ways in which you need to "right old wrongs"? What are they?
3. With whom in your life do you wish you could have a heart-to-heart encounter? What would you like to say to them?
4. Is there someone you can talk to about things that weigh you down? What keeps you from talking to that person?
5. Richard's illness forced him to "reflect on what it means to turn to God and totally trust him" (p. 113). Do you have this trust? What do you think will help you find it?
6. Do you feel you have "completed your mission on earth" (p. 115)?

Chapter Ten: Saying Goodbye

1. What are some specific things you need to do to say goodbye to those you love?
2. Have you ever said goodbye to a loved one? What are the things you value most about this experience?
3. What makes it hard for you to say goodbye to this world?
4. When is the right time to say goodbye to those we love?
5. Are there any words in this chapter you find especially comforting?

Chapter Eleven: Continuing On

1. Have you ever lost someone you really loved? What was it like? What has helped you to grieve that loss? What does Arnold suggest?
2. Have you sometimes stifled the pain of your loss? Is there anything that has made it difficult for you to grieve?
3. If you have lost a spouse, what has helped you to move forward in life?
4. Is there anything Gill writes that you can especially relate to (pp. 135-138)?
5. What other ways can you think of to “use your grief in a positive way” (p. 141)?

Chapter Twelve: Beginning Anew

1. What worries you most about death?
2. What do you believe about the afterlife?
3. What, according to Arnold, is the most important thing about the next life?
4. In what ways are you still wasting too much of your time in this world?
5. What does Arnold mean by “living before eternity?” Why is this important?
6. After reading this book, what thought or idea has meant the most to you?

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