

Week 39: The Blessing of Being Unfinished

It happens almost every Monday morning.

Somewhere in the midst of my commute to the office, I start to review the weekend. Occasionally, I'm richly satisfied by the collection of moments and memories bridging the gap between work weeks. But the truth is, most Mondays, I end up asking myself, "How did I begin the weekend with such good intentions, and how did my priorities get so out of whack so quickly?" A couple of months ago, on a holiday Monday, I received an answer to the question.

For several weeks, we'd been assembling a trailer for our van. My wife and I are not particularly talented mechanics, so the going had been slow. But old friends had come to town for the weekend, and they were helping us put the finishing touches on it. Finally, the last wire was spliced and the last nut was turned. My friend rolled the trailer to the rear of our van to attach it but stopped short when he got there. "You don't have a hitch on your van," he said, "you'll need to buy one and have it installed." This had not occurred to us. Like I said, we are not exactly mechanical geniuses. Our shoulders were slumping in defeat, when our other friend observed, "Well, that's the way of projects. They're never finished."

That's the way of projects, and that's the way of *life*.

The problem isn't that our priorities are out of whack; indeed, most peoples' priorities are soundly *intact*. Most of us want really good things—we want to put people before projects and love before languishing. The problem with our priorities isn't that they are wrong. The problem with our priorities is that they're *on hold*. We don't get started on them because we're always trying to finish something else first. We live the myth that getting things done—making everything neat, tidy, and *over*—is possible. We figure we'll start playing when the work is finished.

We postpone our joy.

We plan to live passionately after we are done living productively. We want to wrestle with the kids but wind up wrestling with our email inbox. We want to play in the yard but wind up *working* in the yard. We want to just *be* in this space, but, instead, we wind up *tidying* our spaces. We just want to breathe, but we wind up losing our breath. We press pause on our most treasured priorities, because our digital projects aren't finished yet. We want to catch up with a friend but instead we catch up on our television shows. We want to pay attention to our kids but instead we pay attention to Facebook Messenger. We wind up playing Words with Friends instead of *speaking* words to the friend next door.

But most importantly, we plan to start risking when our hearts finally feel finished.

We tend to think of our hearts as a project like any other—we have a list of things we think must be accomplished inside of us before we can start taking risks *outside* of us. We think, *Once I'm more confident, I'll start dating. Once I'm more patient, I'll have children. Once my insides look as orderly as everyone else looks on the outside, I'll follow my heart and my passion and start doing the things I want to do in the world. If I read one more book, I'll finally be wise enough to start a blog. If I go to one more conference, I'll finally understand enough to start my business. If I can just learn to relax a little more, I'll have enough strength to step out and try.*

So, to live the things we love, we have to live them with our hearts feeling a little unfinished.

May we give our projects and *ourselves* permission to be unfinished. Then, with the time we'd normally spend trying to finish things or better ourselves, let's love the things we've been wanting to love, do the things we've been wanting to do, and live the things we've been wanting to live. Our time here is short.

The blessing of living unfinished is the opportunity to fill it up with what matters to us most.