



Letting Go of Regrets

We all make mistakes, have struggles, and even regret things in our past. But you are not your mistakes, you are not your struggles, and you are here NOW with the power to shape your day and your future.—*Steve Maraboli*

It's not the end yet

If some choice you made seems to have had a bad outcome, or one that is not what you had in mind, remember that you probably haven't seen its full effect yet. What looks like a stone or a serpent may yet turn out to be bread—or

even a three-course meal.¹ Orson Welles once said, “A happy ending depends on where you stop your story.” Or, as someone else put it, “Everything will be okay in the end; and if it's not okay, it's not the end yet.” That principle is certainly true for those who love the Lord and look to Him for guidance, because He has promised to always work things out for our good in the end.²

It's human nature to look back and have regrets about some of the things we did, or to wish we'd done them differently. God understands that and sympathizes. But it's a mistake to overlook the good that also came from those experiences—the wisdom, maturity, and other lessons learned, which have helped to shape our character and prepare us for things to come.

When you look back on the past, make a conscious effort to count your blessings. Remember those “true, noble, just, pure, and lovely” things that also make up the story of your life.³ Thank God for the good decisions you made in the past, as well as those that He's going to help you to make in the future.

The City of Regret

A significant hindrance to living life in the present is regret. It saps people's energy and leaves little that enables them to do anything positive.

My friend Dwight Bain emailed me something called “The City of Regret” that tells the whole story:

I had not really planned to take a trip this year, yet I found myself packing anyway. And off I went, dreading it. I was on another *guilt trip*.

I booked my reservation on *Wish I Had* airlines. I didn't check my bags—everyone carries their baggage on this airline. I had to drag it for what seemed like miles in the *Regret City airport*. And I could see that people from all over the world were there with me, limping along under the weight of bags they had packed themselves.

I caught a cab to *Last Resort Hotel*, the driver taking the whole trip backward, looking over his shoulder. And there I found the ballroom where my event would be held: the *Annual Pity Party*. As I checked in, I saw that all my old colleagues were on the guest list:

The Done family—Woulda, Coulda, and Shoulda.

Both of the Opportunities—Missed and Lost.

All the Yesterdays—there were too many to count, but all would have sad stories to share.

Shattered Dreams and Broken Promises would be there, too, along with their friends Don't Blame Me and Couldn't Help It.

And of course, hours and hours of entertainment would be provided by that renowned storyteller, It's Their Fault.

As I prepared to settle in for a really long night, I realized that one person had the power to send all those people home and break up the party: *me*. All I had to do was return to the *present* and welcome the new day!

If you have found yourself getting on a flight to the *City of Regret*, recognize that it's a trip you book yourself, and you can cancel it at any time—without penalty or fee. But you're the only one who can.—*John C. Maxwell*⁴

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Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Philippians 3:13–14*⁵

¹ See Luke 11:11–13.

¹ Romans 8:28.

¹ See Philippians 4:8.

¹ *Failing Forward* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000).

¹ Psalm 34:18.

¹ KJV.

