

The background of the cover is a watercolor illustration. It depicts a person's legs in dark green trousers and a hand holding a small, pale, winged cherub-like figure. The style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a muted color palette of greens, browns, and oranges. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

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SECOND INNOCENCE

Rediscovering
joy and wonder

A guide to renewal in work,
relationships, and daily life

An Excerpt From

***Second Innocence:
Rediscovering Joy and Wonder***

by John Izzo

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Second Innocence: A Choice to See Goodness

*"We turn not older with years,
but newer every day."*

—Emily Dickinson

There are only two basic ways to approach life; this is my conclusion after nearly half a century of living and meeting thousands of people. The first vantage point is that of innocence and the second is that of cynicism. At any given moment, and on any given day, each of us makes this choice many times. The way of innocence ushers us to joy and wonder, while the path of cynicism takes us away from the experience of being fully human. The path of innocence promotes renewal, while the path of cynicism slowly erodes our spirits.

Ironically, most of us began life with innocence: a native enthusiasm, a sense of wonder, a firm belief in ourselves and others,

and a willingness to engage deeply in our days without fear or guilt. Yet as we age, whether we are twenty-five or seventy-five, many of us lose that sense of wonder, the faith and hope that give life purpose and meaning. This loss of innocence may be very subtle, but nonetheless very real. Such a loss of innocence happens in part because life is not easy, because others disappoint us and we disappoint ourselves, and because continually finding meaning in the various realms of life requires work. This book is about what it takes to stay innocent and how we can mature without losing our ideals.

Years ago Public Broadcasting made a film about people who had lived to be a hundred. The documentary sought to answer the question: Why do some people make it to a hundred while most do not? They pored through all the research to see if they could find an answer. Was it yogurt? Was it beans? Was it genes? Their conclusion was fascinating: Good genes and a healthy lifestyle can predict living well into your eighties; after that, there seems to be a subtler predictor of that extra ten or twenty years. They called it perseverance, a willingness to move on in spite of disappointment and to re-engage with life.

As if in poetic resonance with their theme, the film makers were interviewing one of their centenarians in her home and the phone rang. As the elderly woman listened, it became obvious she was receiving some very bad news. When she got off the phone, the film crew learned that she had just heard about the death of her eighty-year-old daughter. Shocked and sympathetic, the crew suggested they should come back and finish the interview another time. The woman paused for a moment and said, "No, you've come a long way, give me a moment and we will go on." And on they went, finishing up the interview, as she demonstrated the very quality that best predicted a century of heartbeats. They called it perseverance; I call it second innocence, a choice to claim the wonder and joy of living in spite of the fact that life is not easy.

Why Innocence?

This book did not start out as a book about innocence. It began as a book about experiencing renewal, rediscovering a life filled with more joy and purpose. But as I became more and more aware of what I and others were seeking, the word innocence emerged as an important core concept in our search for a life worth living.

Innocence comes from a Latin word—*innocentia*—which means to be harmless or blameless. *Nocens* is the Latin word for wicked, so innocence literally means to be “without wickedness.”

In one sense, innocence is first and foremost to see the world not as wicked, but as good. In this way our view of the world can be blameless; we can choose to see the world as a good place, an Eden not lost but available.

But the word has a second meaning. Innocence is also a lack of sophistication, naïveté, a lack of self-consciousness, as in the phrase “she innocently asked a question.” There is a sense that a person who is innocent comes to the world without self-consciousness, open to the possibilities that life offers. Innocent people are not jaded by the difficulties and sufferings of life, nor are they self-conscious because of guilt or shame.

Innocence and Childhood

Many of us associate innocence with childhood. Most children appear to have a natural joy and optimism that adults envy and long for. What is that childlike innocence?

Remember back to when you were a child. You likely remember something like this: Childhood is a world of sudden friendships and short sorrows. Put a group of young children together and they are fast friends and instant buddies. Disappoint a child and within a few hours he or she is smiling and laughing again. Children are

good at letting go of things, which is why children can fight one day and be best friends again the next—or even within the hour.

As a child, you likely imagined unlimited possibilities for yourself and believed anything was possible. When I was young I imagined I would be the president one day and even created an imaginary cabinet of “advisors.” My dreams were unlimited and unbounded. In some of my seminars, I ask participants about the wide-open possibilities they imagined for themselves when they were children. The roomful of adults suddenly lights up as people call out things such as ballet dancer, opera singer, painter, baseball player, senator, artist, and adventurer. Then I ask them what messages they received from adults in their life that contributed to the “loss” of those imaginative dreams. As the energy shifts perceptibly, the responses are things such as be realistic, you can’t spend your life dreaming, you have to make a living, I once had dreams like that too but one day you will have to settle, and on it goes. A litany of how our innocence is lost.

When we were children we were also fully engaged in each moment of our day. Whatever was in front of us, we gave it our full attention. Think of how little time you spent as a young child worrying about the future or ruminating over past mistakes and how much time most adults spend worrying about what “may” happen and feeling remorse about what “has” happened. Yet the poets and sages have forever told us that it is only when we live in the “nick of time” (Thoreau) that life can be experienced fully.

Children are also naturally creative and spontaneous, willing to try anything, undaunted by the risk of failure or embarrassment. Researchers have looked at creativity and how it changes from kindergarten to fourth grade. It is both astounding and saddening that within those few short years children’s scores on objective tests for creativity and risk-taking plummet. We go from being willing to do anything anytime, to calculating the risk of failure and embarrassment almost instinctively.

As well, when we were very young, we had a natural faith in the world. Children rarely wonder if life has meaning, they simply act as if what they do matters greatly. Most children believe they can and will change the world in some way.

Why Do We Need Innocence?

Several years ago, as I thought about my own life, I realized that my innocence had faded in a number of significant ways. When my career began, my head was filled with dreams of how my work would make the world a better place. Now, some days I wondered if the work I did made any difference at all. Earlier in my life I dreamed of great romantic love that would endure a lifetime. Now, with numerous relationships come and gone, betrayals scattered through my past, I wondered if true love, deep abiding love, was anything more than a fairy tale woven by great storytellers. At one time I had believed the world was becoming a better place and that it was our generation that would make the turn. But today, with forests disappearing and towers falling down in flames, I wondered sometimes if the human race was getting any better. At every turn, cynicism seemed to have overtaken innocence.

As I thought about the thousands of people I had met in my career and life, I saw this loss of innocence everywhere. Some people in marriages had long ago given up the idea that this would be "bliss" and had fallen into the comfort of an easy arrangement. Some were gutting it out in their careers until vacation or retirement. Some had given up on politics and written off the entire political system, and for some people their childhood faith had been shaken and their spirituality had slipped away. People were attending seminar after seminar in search of one more "life-changing" experience, all the while getting more discouraged at a deeper level. And in much more subtle ways, in our daily lives, mine included, the

wonder and sheer joy of life's moments had become more elusive. It wasn't that life was not good, but that it seemed to offer so much more than many others and myself were experiencing.

At an even more profound level, it seemed to me that the entire planet had begun to lose its innocence. Leaders were talking for the first time in fifty years as if using nuclear weapons was an option; gone was the innocent belief that using these weapons meant the end of the world as we knew it. The polar ice caps were melting, but we read the headlines about global warming as we would a headline about the closure of the corner market, with a tacit acceptance that the loss of innocence, even the innocence of the biosphere itself, was inevitable. Newspapers were filled with scandals about corporate leaders who had bent the rules for their own personal gain. So I wondered, for myself and for my planet, was innocence truly lost or was it possible to capture it again? Was it possible to reclaim our ideals and our innocence without becoming childish? Could we choose to see wonder in the world without becoming naïve? Was it possible to age and not become cynical?

Innocence and Experience

The common belief is that as we age innocence is replaced by experience. As we gain experience we put aside our innocence and begin to see the world as it really is. Because of this belief, we tease those who are just beginning the journey about their naïve optimism and assure them that we were once as idealistic as they are. Whether it is the newlywed husband, the new young recruit at our firm, the fiery young activist fighting for justice, or the young teacher fresh out of college, we tacitly assume that their innocence will be replaced one day by experience, and that innocence must be put aside much as a child must put dolls aside for adult responsibilities. What might happen to us if we began to think of innocence as a quality we bring

to our lives, a perspective and way of looking at the world, which is not replaced by experience but which influences our experience. That is, when we choose innocence as a frame to experience the world, then the qualities of hope, idealism, openness, and faith nurture the experience of wonder and joy in our lives.

So long as we operate on the assumption that innocence is a stage on the way to experience, we fail to grasp the extent to which our loss of innocence shapes our experience of the world. For example, the innocent newlywed enters marriage with the belief that his marriage will fulfill all of his hopes and dreams. When the new union fails to live up to his perfect hopes, he replaces innocence with experience and soon spends his nights at the pub trading marriage jokes with his buddies. All the while he may be unaware of the ways in which it is the very surrendering of his innocence and idealism that has shaped his experience of marriage. The new teacher begins her career fresh out of college filled with innocent idealism about how she will shape the hearts and minds of young people. But soon the harder realities of teaching begin to rob her innocence and she finds herself, almost imperceptibly, slipping into a comfortable seat in the teacher's lounge trading anecdotes with her older colleagues about how hopeless teaching truly is. All the while she is unaware that her choice to give up her innocence is shaping her experience and taking her ever further from the hopes she nurtured for her work in the world. The young idealist joins a political party believing he will "change the world." Those with more experience mock his tilting at windmills and assure him that the system is bigger than he is. If he is not careful, he will allow his innocence to be replaced by experience and find himself alongside others who read the daily news with disgust but scoff at the possibilities of changing the system. And the question arises: Did experience take away the innocence of these travelers or did their loss of innocence change their experience? Is the real challenge of life dealing with how the world comes to us or how we come to the world?

It is not that experience should not shape our idealism. In fact, our initial innocence must be shaped by our experiences. The newly-wed husband must recognize that marriage is hard work but at the same time hold on to his sense of hope about marriage. The new teacher must face the harder truths about shaping young hearts but at the same time hold on to a resolute belief in the power of a teacher to influence students. And the young activist must face the way in which the system resists change while continuing to claim his belief that courage and heart can overcome cynicism. To hold on to our innocence is a lifelong process and it is our ability to foster the quality of innocence that continues to bring us to the edge of what is possible in our lives and in our communities. That we may choose innocence and idealism while incorporating the harder experiences of living is the core premise of this book.

Why Second Innocence?

Although the perspective of being a child helps illuminate the meaning of innocence, second innocence is not about returning to childhood naïveté or discovering our “inner child.” Quite the contrary, it is my contention that we cannot reclaim our first innocence. As wonderful as that innocence was, it was an unconscious innocence, born and bred in part by our ignorance about the world and its harsher truths.

One of the challenges we face in exploring the concept of innocence is the contrasting ways we see childhood. On the one hand, certain elements of being innocent are “childlike,” but we associate other elements of innocence with being “childish.” Many of us would like to be considered “childlike” but few of us want to be accused of being “childish.”

This distinction is critical in understanding why I say we want to become innocent, but that it must be a second innocence. For

example, it is childish not to worry at all about future consequences of present behavior, but it is childlike to get lost in the present moment. It is childish to believe the world is completely good and that there is no suffering, but it is childlike to have a basic faith that life is about something in spite of suffering. It is childish to pretend that you can hurt people and simply say you are sorry, but it is childlike to choose to put your sorrows and hurts behind you and embrace forgiveness.

Why Our First Innocence Must Die

It is my contention that the first innocence must die and pass from us. Why? Because the world is not all good, dreams are not unbounded, death and mortality wait for all of us, and some things about the future are worth worrying about.

As children we do not choose to be innocent; it is simply our nature. We live protected lives, like royalty, as parents protect us from the world's harsher truths. As we mature, our innocence meets disappointment, embarrassment, scientific fact, betrayal, financial concerns and so on, and our natural innocence slowly slips away from us. Some people keep a piece of it, but there are more jaded, faded, overly sophisticated, weary adults than there are joyous, childlike ones. There are also many grown-up Peter Pans still living the irresponsible, self-centered life of the child who wreak havoc on those who know them.

In this sense, the first innocence is like the first stage of romantic love that M. Scott Peck talks about in his book *The Road Less Traveled*. Peck says that "romantic love" is a wonderful collapse of the ego boundaries, a time when we believe that the other person we have met is our absolute soul mate and that he or she is "exactly" like us. He says that romantic love is nature's way of tricking us into mating. But at some point, inevitably, the ego boundaries reappear,

we wake up and realize that this person is wholly “other” and not “us.” Only then, when romantic love dies, is real love possible. This recognition does not diminish romantic love, Peck says, but gives it its rightful place. It is the precursor, an important and necessary precursor, to true love, which must incorporate the true “otherness” of the person we love.

This distinction is analogous to that in innocence. The first innocence is wonderful, it is beautiful, it is an unabashed embracing of all that is good in the world, but it ultimately must face the truth. In this way we all take the journey of the Buddha, who finally left his palace and discovered that there was great suffering in the world. Sheltered in the palace, he could never truly achieve joy. Only now, out in the world, is true innocence possible. Only when we are aware of the truths about life can our jobs, our loves, and our days be infused with deep purpose and meaning. Second innocence is a choice to reclaim our trust and faith in the world, not by denying what we know, but in light of what we know.

What Is Second Innocence?

Second innocence is a choice to see the world with the same eyes of wonder and faith with which we first viewed the world. It is a conscious choice to see the world with the perspective of goodness. Second innocence is not a naïve denial of the hard truths about life—suffering, death, betrayal, greed, loss, boredom—it is a willingness to choose to claim hope and wonder in a way that incorporates these truths. It is, above all things, our ability to be childlike without the destructive elements of being childish. It is the experience of finding ways to renew our love for our jobs, to deepen our relationship with others, to claim a belief in the possibilities of our influence, and to continually discover ways to renew our souls. It is about consistently taking a fresh look at our work, our relationships,

and how we live our days, so that we maintain hope and do not fall into cynicism.

As adults, we live always in this tension between innocence and cynicism. Recently, I experienced a great example of this tension. My friend Adam started a new relationship with a woman. When we sat down for dinner he began to tell me about all of her wonderful qualities, their shared values, the feeling of meeting one's "soul mate," and how much he was enjoying getting to know her. Just then, he paused for a moment and reflected: "But I just can't get fully into it. I guess I've been around long enough now to know how it's going to end. My ex-wife and I felt this same way at the beginning, too!" This loss of innocence and movement toward cynicism keeps us from engaging deeply in the possibilities life offers. Hence the joke going around California now that on the first date a woman asks herself: "Is this the kind of man I want visiting my children on weekends?"

This tension between engaging and holding back is at the very center of the journey to second innocence: Can we love fully after we have failed at love or someone dear to us has betrayed us? Can we see the world of work with the same enthusiasm once we have been fired or had our business go bankrupt? Can we claim a life of integrity after we have "bent" the rules? Can we continue to have faith in the "goodness" of life, once we have lost a loved one to death or seen the horrors of the evening news? Can we live with wonder after disappointing others, finding out our spouse is imperfect, being hurt, and on it goes? Even more, can we keep experiencing life with childlike wonder and joy even as we age and mature?

And make no mistake, we cannot simply go back to our childhood innocence. We cannot pretend that these harder truths do not exist. We cannot become naïve again, but we can make a choice, a conscious choice, not to choose cynicism and bitterness. Second innocence requires us to make choices because, unlike the first innocence, it is an act of the will. The first one is simply given to us; the

second one must truly be chosen, embraced, and nurtured. The first innocence is born and bred of childish ignorance; the second is traveled to, a journey that often includes a passage through a barren place. Whether in marriage, career, faith, or vocation, the second innocence rarely comes without the loss of the first.

Metaphorically, a passage to the second innocence often involves a trip through a desert. All the great heroes of mythology knew of this journey. These deserts can occur in a myriad of ways. The desert can be sitting at our desk for weeks staring at the abyss of career burnout. It can be when a marriage falls, sometimes for years, into nothing more than an enduring truce. It can be when we leave faith behind, but still hum the hymns when we hear them or pray to God in times of desperation. Or in less encompassing ways we may simply feel that the “zest” of life has slowly slipped away from us. In the end, it is a choice to leave the desert, to choose to be innocent again.

The metaphor may be imperfect, but what I have learned in my twenty-five years of meeting thousands of people is that the happiest, most joyful and purposeful people I know have an innocence about them. Not a childish innocence, not a pie-in-the-sky optimism, but an innocence that knows the harsh things that are true of the world and chooses nonetheless to live with hope.

Is Second Innocence Just for Old-Timers?

When I first began to write this book I had to ask myself an important question: Is second innocence only relevant to those in mid-life and beyond? Must one have lost the first innocence to need a second one? My conclusion is that the innocence I write about in this book is a way of living, not a stage of living, and therefore relevant to us at each stage of the life cycle.

Several years ago I was asked by one of the largest health care

organizations in the United States to do a career renewal program for physicians. I was told that many of the physicians, especially those in mid and late career, were “burned out” and in need of recapturing the “spark.” The first day of the workshop the room was filled with thirty physicians, and about two-thirds were forty years of age or older. To my surprise, the rest were young physicians, some just a few years out of medical school. Could they be losing heart already?

As we went around the room, each person spoke about why he or she had signed up for the program. The mid-lifers talked about how it was not as much fun as it used to be, how the joy of practicing medicine had slowly slipped away, and the hard truths of how the practice of medicine had changed. The younger physicians did not speak of being burned out but said they were already learning how tough it could be to maintain your enthusiasm and that they did not want to become like some of their older colleagues. They did not want to leave the work of renewal to be done once they had lost their spirit. Rather, they wanted to be proactive. I had similar experiences years before working with couples on renewing their relationships—some were already losing the spark while others wanted to deal with the work of renewal before they were in trouble. So it is with second innocence: The stories in this book help us at whatever stage we are at to discover the paths to renewing the experience of living.

But Do We Have to Work to Be Innocent Again?

Is second innocence a “feeling”? Is it simply an attitude or something we must work toward through the integration of certain practices and disciplines in our lives? It seems to me that the answer is yes to both questions.

On the one hand, second innocence is a simple choice, a deci-

sion to see life again with fresh eyes. It is a choice to wake up, to be aware of the joy all around us, to believe that the universe is friendly, to affirm the beauty of all things, to see possibilities in your marriage, to know your work makes a difference, to choose again the possibilities of your vocation, to reclaim your ideals, and to be more in the moment. It is not a choice we make once, but a choice we make hundreds of times every week.

Second innocence is a turning point, a simple choice, but it also involves a good deal of hard work and discipline to integrate this way of being into your life. Each day we must find ways to choose innocence over cynicism. This book is an exploration of the turning points we must experience as well as some of the practices we must embark upon, to integrate innocence more deeply into our lives.

Second innocence is not something we experience once in some great moment of awakening. These stories illustrate that whether we are young or old, we always live in the daily tension between idealism and cynicism, joy and despair, faith and unbelief, wonder and boredom, and the choice to see goodness or evil in the world we inhabit. So second innocence is the experience of claiming hope and wonder again and again in the different realms and moments in which our lives are lived.

Innocence

*I am innocence
Staring up at you with a bashful smile
Biting my lower lip
As a curl twists around my finger
Will you kiss me?
I am anxious and eager
You bend
For your mouth to meet mine
I jump up and run
Laughing joyously, hair flying
Bare Toes
Prancing across open fields
Clouds drift slowly overhead
Enveloped in the afternoon sky
Myriad sun sprinkles caress my skin
And you begin the chase
Catch me if you can*

—Shelley Langstaff

PART I

*Rediscovering
Wonder
in the
Daily Journey*



A friend of mine used to
say that the problem with life is that it is
"so daily."

What he meant was that it is how we live and approach each day that ultimately determines the quality of our lives. In this same way, the choice to move toward innocence rather than cynicism is one that we make each day, and often many times during the same day.

We don't rediscover joy and wonder through one large choice we make but hundreds of smaller ones. It is something akin to a silly riddle my kids used to ask me: "How do you eat an elephant?" One bite at a time!

This first section explores the mindsets that are required to find joy and wonder in each day, to discover a second innocence. It begins with stories about figuring out what really matters to us and then explores some ways of thinking about life that seem to facilitate innocence:

Dealing with detours, letting go, opening up to awe and wonder, living with courage, and making time for our favorite subjects.

The principles found in these chapters set the stage for a deeper exploration of how we rediscover joy and wonder in the context of work, relationships, and spirituality.



I

Most of Life Is Rowing

My grandfather was a man who lived a rich life. A shipbuilder by trade, he was one of eleven children born in rural Nova Scotia. Although our family had been in Nova Scotia since 1746, my grandparents moved to New York in search of work during the Great Depression.

Grandfather was a quiet man, a deeply religious man, and, perhaps most of all, a person of significant character. Of all the people in my family, alive or dead, he lives on in mythology. Whether in stories of kneeling by his bed to pray before sleep or inviting homeless people home for dinner during the Great Depression (even though he was barely working himself), he is remembered as a good worker, a good father, and a caring human being. From him I gathered the simple phrase “good tired” to describe the experience of a day well spent.

Once when I was in high school, my grandfather invited me to go on a rowing trip with him. He loved the sea and told me that this

particular evening promised a glorious sunset. "Would you be interested in going on a rowing trip with me to visit a tiny cove I'm sure you've not seen?" he inquired. Looking outside, wiping the sweat from my teenaged forehead, I suggested that 95 degrees was not the perfect time for a long rowing trip and said another time would be better. "Ah," he said, "another time is for young men. Let's do it now."

With that clarity of perspective, off we went on what would turn out to be a nonstop row of more than an hour. Given that he was in his seventies and I a mere fifteen, the rowing naturally fell on my shoulders. All during our trip to that cove, he was chiding me to go faster else we miss the promised sunset. "Chop, chop," he piped up. Sweating profusely, I diligently rowed until more than an hour had passed and we turned a corner beyond a tiny point of land and into the promised cove. Moments later, the sky burst into an orange-purple blaze. My grandfather was right, the cove and the sunset were both breathtaking. The scene is one I will never forget.

We were there, however, for no more than a couple of minutes when my grandfather said, "Well, let's head back now."

Incredulous, I protested. "Granddad, you were right, it is beautiful here. But look at me, I'm dying—let's stay for a while."

"No," he said, "they'll have made dinner for us and we're already late. We ought to think of others, not just ourselves. Besides, we've seen it and this beautiful sunset will follow us home."

Hands on the oars, I began the journey back. With each pull I renewed my complaining: "It was nice, but not worth all that rowing. . . . This boat is too old and needs new oars. . . . The current's too strong today. . . . You're the big shipbuilder—why don't you take a turn rowing?" On and on I went. My grandfather merely sat quietly, enjoying the sunset.

Finally, after about thirty minutes he gazed at me and quietly said, "John, put the oars down, would you?"

With the oars in the boat he stared me in the face: "I want to tell you something today, something I very much hope you will

remember. John, most of life is rowing and if you don't learn to be good at—and enjoy—the rowing, you will grow up to be a very unhappy man. Now put your hands on the wood and take me home.”

I would love to tell you that the scales fell from my eyes in that moment and my life was lived differently from then until now. But that would not be true. At the time, those words seemed like the babblings of an old shipbuilder about to make his last sail. But thirty years have passed and I know now what he meant.

Life is mostly rowing. There are, of course, moments of ecstasy, but most of life is made up of simpler moments. A walk on the beach, a glancing view of a beautiful cornfield out an airplane window, the first time you see your child steal a base, a conversation where you know your words helped a friend, lying in a tent by a river with the few people you love most, the good feeling at the end of a hard day at work when you know your efforts were not in vain. It is precisely our ability to be present and enjoy those moments that makes life worth living. We can spend our entire lives trying to get from one big sunset to the next and miss a whole lot of great living in between. Sure those great sunsets are wonderful, but they are the icing, not the cake.

The big things do not determine our success in the many realms of our life. Marriages are not built on the big anniversary trip to Hawaii or the special gift that marks a date. It is in the rowing that marriages are made and broken, in the daily honoring of life together. Parents do not raise children well because of the camping trip taken once each year to provide “quality time.” Rather it is in the rowing moments, simple exchanges that occur thousands of times over the years that our children learn the lessons they will need to live a life uncommon. Leaders do not earn their stripes at the annual meeting when they give a rousing speech that inspires the masses, but in the daily way their rowing inspires a sense of pride and respect among those whom they lead.

But how do we begin to get better at the rowing and to appreciate the simpler pleasures it has to offer? How do we reclaim the innocence, faith, and wonder with which we were graced when we came into the world?

It seems to me that it begins with realizing that life is not about where we are going as much as it is about being where we are. How much of our lives are lived with the future as our focus—saving for retirement, waiting for the weekend, counting the days until vacation, looking forward to graduation, the next promotion. We seem destined to believe life will be better when we finally get *there*.

When we choose to believe that each moment, however simple, offers as much to us as the great shining moment of ecstasy, we begin to experience our lives in a different way. It is not that those moments of supreme satisfaction are unimportant; it is that most of life is spent rowing to and from the tiny cove and the rowing offers us just as much as the destination.

What part of the rowing must you pay more attention to? Are you enjoying the moments of your life fully or waiting for some future sunset when life will be what you desire it to be?

Enjoy the Journey

For thirty years since that rowing trip, as a minister, father, writer, husband, workshop leader, friend, and corporate advisor, I have tried to understand the lessons of that sunset. This book is a set of anecdotes, experiences, and reflections on how to rediscover the joy and wonder of life, the attempt of one person to reclaim the innocent faith and sense of purpose that gives life richness.

At this moment I find myself thinking back on my life, trying to recall the moments that stand out. To my surprise they are not my college graduation with honors, the speeches given before thousands of people, the day I held my first published book. Instead, I

think of the cove with my grandfather, an afternoon nap in a tent with the wind gently blowing and cooling my face as my entire family slept beside me, a ride with my friend Steve in an old red canoe decades after my grandfather's trip, the e-mail I got last week from a person saying that something I had written had touched him deeply, and that my father would be proud of me. The moments are almost all moments of "rowing," simple pleasures that have come together to create a rich and meaningful life, a life of awe and wonder.

I have come to a place in my life where I have begun to experience what I call second innocence, a renewed sense of faith, hope, idealism, happiness, wonder, joy, and destiny. It is my hope that in sharing my journey of rowing, and the stories of those I have met along the way, your imagination will be captured and your life experienced with a fresh set of eyes.

this material has been excerpted from

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Rediscovering Joy and Wonder***

by John Izzo

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