

BY JOE FORWARD

When contemplating life through the lens of death, I thought there was more I could have done.



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Final Thought: A Final Thought

Time is limited. A new year is a new opportunity to make changes for the better, whatever they may be.

I almost died recently. It was Nov. 30, 2022, a Wednesday. I was driving to get a hair-cut, which I do every five weeks. I was in the far-right lane on a busy semi-truck-laden interstate highway. Up ahead in the distance,¹ a tractor-trailer was parked or stalled on the narrow right shoulder.

On my left was another tractor-trailer buzzing next to me. I should have slowed down, let the truck pass, and merged left. But I didn't. I was late. As we approached the parked semi on the shoulder at 70 miles per hour (maybe 75), the semi on my left had already begun to merge right.

I was in the driver's blind spot or the driver could not see my tiny Honda Civic or simply wasn't paying attention. I yelled out fu%! and slammed the brakes, fishtailing as the truck merged just a few feet in front of my car. If I had braked a second or two later, the merging truck probably would have pinned me into the back of the parked semi on the shoulder, and I would have surely died.

In those seconds before certain death, life did not flash before my eyes, as some say is common. I did not see my childhood. I did not smell the summer cut grass, feel the warmth of sunshine, or taste the orange fruit. I did not hear the music play. What flashed, or maybe what resonated in the seconds, minutes, hours, and days after, and still now, was the future without me.

Did I do enough in life, for my spirit to live in death? Did I plan for my family's well-being? Would they remember how much I loved them because I showed them? Would they be proud of me? Did I work hard enough to reach my potential? Did I leave it all on the field?

Could I have been a better friend, a better father, a better husband, brother, son? Did I fulfill my promises and dreams?

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I'm typing this with four fingers. Why did I not learn to type? Could I have been a better friend, a better father, a better husband, brother, son? Did I fulfill my promises and dreams? Read all the books? Did I do what I could to help less fortunate people? Was I the best role model I could be?

We all have loved ones who have died. If we loved them, there was a reason why. They brought joy to our lives, raised us to be strong, supported us in life, and stayed with us in death. They all had flaws, as we all do. Their goodness outweighed the flaws, and so we hold them dear.

I did not die that day, by the grace of God, fate, or pure luck. Whatever you believe. The next time around, if I do go, I will have worked harder to put more "good" on the scale.

This is what I'm doing this year. How about you? Also, drive carefully.

¹*Hotel California*, The Eagles (1976). **WL**