



Recommended Reading

The Last Lecture

By Todd Peterson

Last September, I read a newspaper column titled "A Beloved Professor Delivers The Lecture of a Lifetime." The writer, Jeffrey Zaslow, noted that a number of colleges have started "Last Lecture Series" in which top professors are "asked to think deeply about what matters to them and to give hypothetical final talks." He said the question for us to consider is:

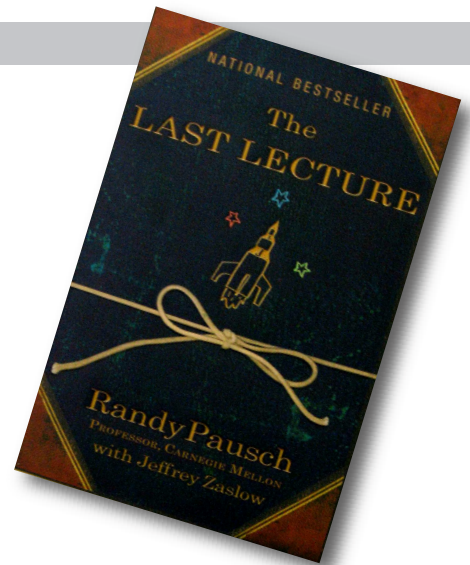
"What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance?"

Professor Randy Pausch's final talk was different than those of other professors. At the age of 47, Dr. Pausch is dying of pancreatic cancer – a disease which usually kills its victims within months of diagnosis. And he has been married for just eight years to his wife, Jai, and has three young children under the age of 6.

Dr. Pausch's lecture on "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams," was presented to 400 colleagues and students. Today, his 70-minute talk (www.cmu.edu/randyslecture) has been seen by over 10 million people and translated into seven languages! He appeared on the Oprah show, was featured in Parade magazine, and interviewed by Diane Sawyer on Primetime.

Randy Pausch's now-famous lecture has been expanded into a book. He wrote *The Last Lecture* over the phone with Zaslow while on fifty-three long bike rides to keep up his strength.

In the book's introduction, Pausch writes "I knew what I was doing that day. Under the ruse of doing an academic lecture, I was trying to put myself in a bottle that would one day wash up on the beach for my children."



He continues themes from his lecture "about the joy of life, about how I appreciated life, even with so little time left. I talked about honesty, integrity, gratitude, and other things I hold dear. And I tried very hard not to be boring."

Pausch's book offers sixty-one short essays about living, not about dying. It is a book about love of family, mentoring young people, overcoming obstacles, seizing every moment, and the importance of having life dreams.

The wisdom of Randy Pausch is exemplified best in his words: "As I see it, a parent's job is to encourage kids to develop joy for life and a great urge to follow their own dreams. The best we can do is to help them develop a personal set of tools for the task."

"So my dreams for my kids are very exact: I want them to find their path to fulfillment. And given that I won't be there, I want to make this clear: Kids, don't try to figure out what I wanted you to become. I want you to become what you want to become."

I hope *The Last Lecture* will inspire young people (and older adults) to begin considering their personal life legacies at an earlier age. It may bring about important changes in how they choose to live their lives. And have a positive impact on future generations of people who inhabit this beautiful world.

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