

# The Second Half of Life:

A Season for Spiritual Growth and Service

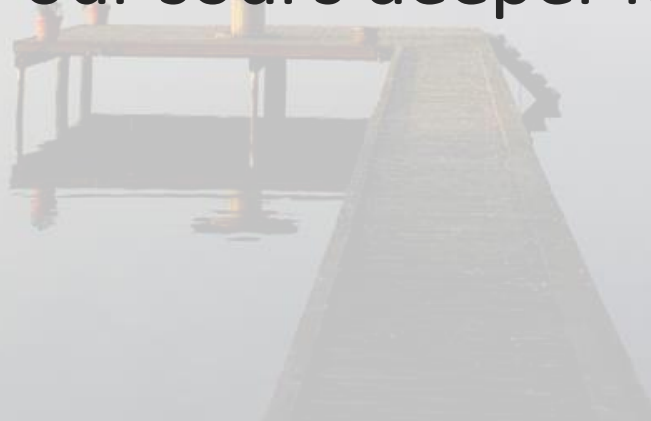


# Summary of Key Points About the Second Half of Life



# The Good News

- Fertile time for transformation.
- For remaking meaning and purpose.
- For responding to our soul's deeper longing.



# The First Half of Life

- First half is about acquisition.
- Requires competition.
- Requires action.
- Purpose and meaning very related to first half mode.
- Culture values the first half mode.

# The Issue

“One cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life’s morning; for what was great in the morning will be little in the evening; and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie.”

-- Carl Jung

“What is a normal goal to a young person becomes a neurotic hindrance in old age.”

# Shifts Required in the Second Half

- From doing to being.
- From competition to cooperation.
- From material to spiritual.
- From acquisition to letting go.



“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.”  
-- Albert Einstein

# Challenges of the Second Half of Life

- Dealing with the unfamiliarity of second half principles.
- Losses
- Remaking meaning and purpose.
- Living a vital life despite the diminishments.



# Opportunities of the Second Half of Life

- Healing the past.
- Time for self.
- Acquiring more of me/living my own life.
- Living more vitally than our culture predicts.
- Giving back and determining our legacy.



# The Second Half of Life as Prime Time for Spiritual Growth

- The first half tasks have been accomplished, and we are in transition.
- Our ego is less demanding.
- We have time.
- We have a solid base of life experience.
- We're more ready to let go.
- The growth work of the second half is, by nature, spiritual.

# Spirituality

- Definition: Spirituality is about the quality of our relationships with self, others and God or Higher Power.
- It is not the same as religion.
- We can be religious but not spiritual.
- We can be spiritual but not religious.
- We can be both.



# The Overall Call of the Second Half

- To mental, emotional and psychological maturity.
- To spiritual maturity.
- In effect, Jesus calls us and the people of his time to the second half of life mode.

# The Second Half as Battle with the False Self

- The “false self” consists of young, instinctual needs for security, pleasure, independence, control or power, affection and esteem. These are normal in childhood, but they get locked into unconscious “energy centers” that drive our behavior as adults while out of our awareness.
- They block growth, keeping us at immature levels of development, interfering with relationships and happiness.

# The Second Half as Battle with the False Self— continued

- Combined with the clutter of past traumas and the defenses we built to reduce suffering from them, these very young needs can even block the work God wants to do in us.
- We need humility not discouragement as we become more in touch with our false self.
- Acceptance of our basic goodness is a quantum leap upward in the spiritual journey.

# The “Energy Centers”

- Power and control.
- Sensation.
  - Affection.
  - Esteem.
  - Sexual energy.
  - Pleasure.
- Security.
  - Survival and security.
  - Prompt fulfillment of instinctual needs.
- ( Note: While not sinful in themselves the energy centers can lead to sin.)

# Dismantling the Energy Centers

- The False Self holds us in the lower levels of consciousness (power, sensation, security) thus blocking our spiritual growth).
- We need the willingness and courage to look hard and honestly at ourselves, especially at what motivates us.
- Working at the second half of life shifts is also to be working at dismantling the False Self, a major work of the spiritual journey.
- Work to heal past traumas helps.
- Psychotherapy, spiritual direction, spiritual accompanying, prayer of quiet all help.

# Some Fruits of the Dismantling Process

- Freedom from self centered motivation.
- Happiness in place of chronic frustration and misery.
- A sense of connectedness with and responsibility for all of creation, especially the human family.
- True humility.
- A growing conviction of our basic goodness and capacity for union with God.



# Being “Shifty”-- or Growing Up

- from doing to being.
- from material to spiritual.
- from competition to cooperation.
- from either/or to both/and.
- from false self to true self (God).
- from goal driven to soul driven.
- from happiness as goal to meaning as goal.
- from value based on what we do to value based on who we are.
- from outer focus to inner focus.
- from focus on material goods to focus on relationships.
- from acquisition to letting go.
- from knowing rules to transforming love.
- from external acts to interior motivation.

# Letting Go—Central to Second Half Spirituality

We move from first half acquisition, etc. to detaching from:

- wounds and anger—forgiveness becomes key.
- the need to possess, to achieve, to be the center of attention.
- ultimately, from Earth and our loved ones.

We move towards:

- silence.
- from knowing the rules to transforming love.

(“In the evening (or twilight) of life, we will be judged on love.”)

--- St. John of the Cross, Spanish Mystic

# From Ageing to Sageing

“Our images of aging are more the problem than aging itself.”

-- Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

- Our culture views aging as a process of gradually worsening personal diminishment and disengagement from life.
- Schachter-Shalomi says, “We need to view old age as the culminating stage of spiritual development.”

# Eldering

“Eldering implies that we take active responsibility for our destiny in old age. We not only take responsibility for our destiny, but we do the work necessary to give back to society and the world from our accumulated experience and wisdom.”

-- Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

# The Movement in Elders

- Is away from personal ego and ambition towards contributing to the common good.
- Is inward and deeper. (Elders don't have the last word; they have the "deep word.")
- Elders become:
  - *Teachers and mentors.*
  - *Mediators.*
  - *Monitors.*
  - *Mobilizers away from self-interest and towards the common or public good.*

# Predictions For The Future Are Dire!

- Climate tipping point could be reached by 2050.
- All fish could be gone from the sea by 2048.
- 80% of the world's original forests have been eliminated.
- One-half of all species could be extinct within the next fifty years.
- 1% of Americans own 40% of its wealth.
- Upheaval riots and war as countries and people fight for dwindling resources.

# We Need Elders.

There are a lot of us.

Elders can bring the second half of life characteristics to the table.

Elders have time.

Elders don't have time.



# I want to help, but what can I do?

The problems are so big.

I am just one person.

What difference would it make?

I'll, at least, send a check.





# The Good News

Join with like minded people.

A peaceful grace roots movement of committed individuals is gathering momentum around the world to save the planet and improve life for everyone.

Numerous groups are already working individually and collaboratively to bring about needed changes to save our planet and improve life on it.

# WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR LEGACY TO BE?

- What sort of world do you want for your children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren?
- Where will you leave your heart?

# On Being a Game Changer

Each of us has different gifts. Give your gift towards something that is beautiful to you. If we want to develop spiritually, we have to engage with the world. There is a convergence of spirituality and activism. We need deep, deep commitment that goes beyond doing just enough to feel like a good person. I can't stay in the story by myself. I need community. You will feel the gathering of the courage when the moment arrives for what you felt drawn to but were not quite ready for. You don't have to force it.

-- Charles Eisenstein

# Final Focus

- Any second half work you do, however small, has potential for creating disproportionately large returns for the world.
- The world needs what elders who are willing to step into their elderhood can give.
- In a just released book, Margaret Wheatley talks about leaders creating “islands of sanity.” I believe elders can do the same in their environments.

## My Prayer for You

- In the words of Joanna Macy:



*May you have “Blessed unrest.”*



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QUESTIONS?

