

Spirituality for the Second Half of Life



"These are the capstone years, the time in which a whole new life is in the making again. But the gift of these years is not merely being alive—it is the gift of becoming more fully alive than ever."

The Gift of Years, Joan Chittister

Our focus for *Souls on the Journey* will be "Spirituality for the Second Half of Life"

We will continue to offer a retreat day for spiritual reflection and discussion with co-journeymen, sharing prayer time, discussion and experiential contemplation.

These days are open to anyone who would like to share gentle time together to meet Spirit. We would love if you can commit to all four events so all of us may more fully share this gift of becoming more fully alive! Our group is limited to 12 participants.

These gatherings foster openness and offer safety across lines of our various theological, political, and denominational positions.

Our Theme: *Taking care of unfinished business*

Our Mantra: "Want what you have, do what you can, and be who you are!" (*Love and Death*, Forrest Church)

Our Schedule: 10am to 3pm, Tuesdays, September 14, 2010; November 16, 2010; January 18, 2011 and March 22, 2011 – meeting at Kenbrook Camp, www.kenbrook.org

Our Reading List:

Essential readings are just that- if you choose- suggested readings are just that- and mostly suggestions for your lifetime! Read whatever of the list calls to you! We look forward to sharing them with you!

Suggested overall workbook for program:

***Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*, Christina Baldwin ISBN-13: 978-0553352023**

Chapters 1 & 2 for September, Chapter 3 for November, Chapter 4 for January, Chapters 5 & 6 for March

Writing is a means of expanding our inner horizons, of relating more meaningfully to the world we live in and to other travelers on the spiritual path. The book illuminates its text with enlightening quotations, exercises, questions, and techniques to nurture the writer and seeker within. Centered in a broad spiritual philosophy.

Theme for September 14: defining and accepting our second half of life

Essential Reading

1. *Contemplation and Midlife Crisis: Examples from Classical and Contemporary Spirituality*

Rosemarie Carfagna ISBN-13: 978-0809144983

The experience of crisis, especially midlife crisis, is universal. It explores the experience of contemplation using descriptions from the field of spirituality and from classical spiritual literature by highlighting critical moments in the lives of historical figures such as Augustine, Ignatius, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, as well as contemporary figures such as Henri Nouwen, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Kathleen Norris, C.S. Lewis, Sue Monk Kidd, and Gerald May.

The book is especially encouraging to those who fear that God is absent by showing comparisons between the critical moment and the contemplative moment, and by offering an affirmative way of responding to the multiple crises that beset the middle years of life.

Suggested readings for September

2. *Mid-Life Psychological and Spiritual Perspectives* Janice Brewi, Anne Brennan ISBN-10: 0824504178

Authors are the founders of Mid-Life Directions, an organization that supports individuals through mid-life crises and beyond.

3. *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, Barbara Ehrenreich

ISBN-10: 0805057242

impressive, ambitious, and alluring- explores a human impulse that has been so effectively suppressed that we lack even a term for it: the desire for collective joy, historically expressed in revels of feasting, costuming, and dancing.

4. *Painting the Dream: The Shamanic Life and Art of David* Chethlahe Paladin, ISBN-10: 1591430135

light-bearer and a truth-bringer, an original thinker and a spiritual warrior who ushers in a new light that allows all of us to see our world with new eyes . . . and take us more deeply into understanding our own spiritual journey.

Theme for November 16: breaking open and healing

Essential Reading

1. *Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow*, Elizabeth Lesser, ISBN-10: 0375508066

Cofounder of the upstate New York Omega Institute and author of *The Seeker's Guide*, Lesser uses her own life story, and those of others, to explore what she calls the "Phoenix Process," or positive life change that can emerge from very difficult life events. She brings in thinkers such as Tibetan Buddhist Pema Chodron, the late philosopher Joseph Campbell and her longtime friend and colleague Ram Dass to illustrate how meditation and belief in a spirit that works through people can help break through fear and hopelessness.

Suggested reading for November

2. *From Age-Ing to Sage-Ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi **ISBN-10:** 0446671770

Part 1 of the book recommends meditation, exercise, and spiritual healing to help individuals enter their later years. Part 2 he speaks to our limited perceptions of death. Creating ceremonies and learning to forgive help ease the transition into death. As a personal dimension, the rabbi compassionately relates his own mental crisis as he approaches the age of 60 to help readers understand the process

3. *After the Darkest Hour: How Suffering Begins the Journey to Wisdom* by Kahleen A. Brehony Ph.D. ISBN-13: 978-0805064360

weaves together touching stories of suffering and redemption. The first half of the book describes the nature of suffering, its transformative power, how different people react to suffering, and choices to be made. The second section deals with 12 concrete ways to encounter suffering and grow through it with references to Judeo-Christian, Eastern, and Native American religions as well as philosophers and psychologists

4. *Grace and Grit: Spirituality and Healing in the Life and Death of Treya Killam Wilber*, Ken Wilber, ISBN-10: 1570627428

Ten days after transpersonal psychologist Wilber married Treya Killam in 1983, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. This harrowing account of her losing battle against disease is unusual in several respects. Killam's belief in the "perennial philosophy" of the world's wisdom traditions embraces rebirth, enlightenment and the all-pervasiveness of Spirit. Her lengthy, candid journal entries, interwoven with his narrative, form a tremendously moving love story. Killam, who died in 1989, combined orthodox treatment with such alternative therapies as diet, meditation and psychotherapy.

Theme for January 18: Aging into hope, joy, grace

Essential Reading for January:

1. ***The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully***, Joan Chittister, 1933346108

Chittister, now in her 70s, examines how it feels "to be facing that time of life for which there is no career plan." Clearly, getting older has not diminished the controversial nun, activist, lecturer and author. This collection of inspirational reflections, "not meant to be read in one sitting, or even in order, but one topic at a time," abounds in gentle insights and arresting aphorisms: "'Act your age' can be useful advice when you're seventeen; it's a mistake when you're seventy-seven." Beginning each short chapter with a trenchant quotation ("'It takes a long time,' Pablo Picasso wrote, 'to become young'"), she ponders topics such as fear, mystery, forgiveness and legacy. Old age is rich for those who choose to thrive, not wither.

Suggested readings for January:

2. ***The Way of Transition: Embracing Life's Most Difficult Moments***, William Bridges ISBN-13: 978-0738205298

Whether it is chosen or thrust upon you, change brings both opportunities and turmoil. With the understanding born of both personal and professional experience, William Bridges takes readers step by step through the three stages of any transition: The Ending, The Neutral Zone, and, in time, The New Beginning. Bridges explains how each stage can be understood and embraced, leading to meaningful and productive movement into a hopeful future.

3. ***Hunting for Hope: A Father's Journeys*** by Scott R. Sanders, ISBN-10: 0807064254

This writer offers inspiration and fuel for all who care about the state of the world. But to his teenage son Jesse he has passed on not hope, but a paralyzing unease.

"You make me feel the planet's dying and people are to blame and nothing can be done about it," Jesse tells his father. "Maybe you can get by without hope, but I can't. I've got a lot of living still to do. I have to believe there's a way out of this mess. Otherwise what's the point? Why study, why work--why do anything if it's all going to hell?"

Sanders, taking his son's questions as seriously as any environmental quandary, sets out to locate and write about the sources of his own modest optimism.

4. ***Tales of Wonder, Adventures Chasing the Divine, an Autobiography***,

Huston Smith , ISBN-10: 0061154261

Smith parts the curtain on his past and says, "Look!" with the enthusiasm of a child--something he has not yet lost at age 90. The result is a joyous romp with a favorite uncle among holy places and mystics--the most interesting of them the author of the book."

Theme for March 22: Living fully-dying well

Essential Reading for March

1. *Love & Death, My Journey through the Valley of the Shadow*, Forrest Church, ISBN: 9780807072936

Past Senior Minister at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in New York City. In this courageous and wise work, Church recounts his "journey through the Valley of the Shadow." We cannot protect love from death. But by giving away our hearts, we can protect our lives from the death of love.

Suggested Readings for March

2. *Living Fully, Dying Well: Reflecting on Death to Find Your Life's Meaning*

Isbn-10: 1591797012

...when we engage with our inevitable mortality at this moment, we open the door to fearlessness, joy, and the complete experience of being alive. Integrating scientific and spiritual perspectives from around the world, this collection includes: Life review exercises to access the liberating deathbed revelation at any stage of your life; Practices for easing the suffering of a terminal illness; Essential teachings about gratitude, the key practice for living life fully at any age. Featuring the wisdom of Joan Halifax, Dr. Ira Byock, Tessa Bielecki, Dr. Marilyn Schlitz, and more this is an illuminating, informative and even exciting guide to consciously embracing our mortality.

3. *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker, ISBN-10: 0844669326

Winner of the Pulitzer prize in 1974 and the culmination of a life's work, this is a brilliant and impassioned answer to the "why" of human existence. In bold contrast to the predominant Freudian school of thought, Becker tackles the problem of the vital lie -- man's refusal to acknowledge his own mortality. In doing so, he sheds new light on the nature of humanity and issues a call to life and its living.

4. *The Great Work- Our Way into the future*, Thomas Berry, ISBN-10: 0609804995

The future can exist only if humans understand how to commune with the natural world rather than exploit it. Berry is an optimistic soul, hopeful that humans will rise to the challenge of cherishing the natural world in the third millennium. "Our future destiny rests even more decisively on our capacity for intimacy in our human-Earth relations." Berry predicts. Because Berry has a science background as well as a spiritual orientation (he is the founder of the History of Religions Program at Fordham University), he brings a balanced and fresh voice to social ecology.

When Death Comes, Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins
from his purse
to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;
when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,
I want to step through the door full of curiosity,
wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of
darkness?
And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,
and each name a comfortable music in the mouth
tending as all music does, toward silence,
and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.
When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my
arms.
When it is over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular,
and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and
frightened,
or full of argument.
I don't want to end up simply having visited this
world

