

We Begin Again

Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light.

- ALBERT SCHWEITZER

REVOLUTIONARY CHALLENGE

Most spiritual traditions prescribe some kind of Sabbath, time consecrated to enjoy and celebrate what is beautiful and good—time to light candles, sing songs, worship, tell stories, bless our children and loved ones, give thanks, share meals, nap, walk and even make love. It is time to be nourished and refreshed as we let our work, our chores and our important projects lie fallow, trusting that there are larger forces at work taking care of the world when we are at rest.

Sabbath time is a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, because it honors the necessary wisdom of dormancy. If certain plant species do not lie dormant during winter, the plant begins to die off. Rest is not just a psychological convenience; it is a spiritual and biological necessity. Perhaps this is why, in most spiritual traditions, "Remember the Sabbath" is more than simply a lifestyle suggestion.

I make a plea for renewed Sabbath-keeping. As a nation, we cannot live like this, endlessly rushing about in a desperate frenzy, never stopping to enjoy the blessings of family and friends, unable to taste the fruits of life. We can change society by beginning a quiet revolution of change in ourselves and our families. Let us take a collective breath, rest, pray, meditate, walk, sing, eat and take time to share the unhurried company of those we love. Let us, for just one day, cease our desperate striving for more, and instead taste the blessings we have already been given, and give thanks.

- EXCERPT FROM THE SABBATH
BY WAYNE MULLER

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

- C.S. LEWIS

WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

If you were to die today, what are the things you would most regret not having done or said? Is there something you really want to finish for your family? Is there someone important in your life whom you haven't taken the time to connect with? We put people and things on hold, assuming we will have a tomorrow. The reality is that life is shorter than we think. Begin this New Year by checking to see if how you spend your time reflects your most important values and purposes. In taking time to reflect and write out the things you would most regret should you die today, you might even remove some things from your to do list and thus make room for the things that matter most.

THE ENERGY OF PRESENCE

I had always been a great believer in commitment, in every aspect of life that mattered to me. Total commitment to marriage, to family, to country, to coworkers and firm, to neighbors and fellow human beings. . . Unfortunately, though, commitment, particularly in the business world, had come to equal time. Too often, your commitment was routinely measured by how many hours you were willing to work. How much time you would take away from your family. If you gave away huge amounts of your time, then it followed that you had exhibited commitment. Time alone was the bellweather.

In fact, it's not about time. . . Commitment is about depth. It's about effort. It's about passion. It's about wanting to be in a certain place and not somewhere else. Of course, time is involved; it would be naive and illogical to suggest otherwise. But commitment is best measured not by the time one is willing to give up but, more accurately, by the energy one wants to put in – by how present one is.

- EUGENE O'KELLY

*None of us has the power to make someone else love us.
But we do have the power to give away love to other people.
And if we do, we change the kind of person we are.
And we change the kind of world we live in.
Amen.*

- ANONYMOUS

NON-REVERSIBLE DECISIONS

I think the power of nonreversible decisions comes through most clearly when we think about our most important choices. A friend told me how his minister had shocked the congregation with a sermon on marriage in which he said flatly that, yes, the grass is always greener. What he meant was that, inevitably, you will encounter people who are younger, better looking, funnier, smarter, or seemingly more understanding and empathetic than your wife or husband. But finding a life partner is not a matter of comparison shopping and "trading up." The only way to find happiness and stability in the presence of seemingly attractive and tempting options is to say, "I'm simply not going there. I've made my decision about a life partner, so this person's empathy or that person's looks really have nothing to do with me. I'm not in the market - end of story." Agonizing over whether your love is "the real thing" or your sexual relationship above or below par, and wondering whether you could have done better is a prescription for misery. Knowing that you've made a choice that you will not reverse allows you to pour your energy into improving the relationship that you have rather than constantly second-guessing it.

- BARRY SCHWARTZ

LETTING GO

At one time or another each of us confronts an experience so powerful, bewildering, joyous, or terrifying that all our efforts to see it as a "problem" are futile. Each of us is brought to the cliff's edge. At such moments we can either back away in bitterness or confusion, or leap forward into mystery. And what does mystery ask of us? Only that we be in its presence, that we fully, consciously, hand ourselves over. That is all, and that is everything. We can participate in mystery only by letting go of solutions. This letting go is the first lesson of falling, and the hardest.

- PHILIP SIMMONS

A FRESH START?

Actually, making mistakes is unavoidable, and the mistake is less important in most cases, than what the individual does after he has made the mistake. If he is discouraged, demoralized and beset with guilt feelings, he cannot face the situation as it is. But if he is a courageous person, the predicament may often lead to benefits which would never have been possible without the original mistake. What is needed is not concern with what we have done wrong, but the determination to meet the demands of the moment.

- RUDOLF DREIKURS

*If you fell down yesterday,
stand up today.*

- H.G. WELLS

Once we face the facts - then face them again and again - once we know we'll never be perfect or find a perfect purpose, we can wade right into reality and construct a life.

- LINDA ANDERSON KRECH

IMPERMANENCE

The average human being thinks that happiness lies in stability, in tying up all the loose ends and having things under control. But actually, happiness lies in being able to relax with our true condition, which is basically fleeting, dynamic, and fluid, not in any way solid, not in any way permanent. It's transient by nature.

- PEMA CHODRON

*Birth and death in each moment.
If you wish to be a cat, chase a mouse.
If you wish to be a child, throw a snowball at the moon.
What are you waiting for?*

- HO SEN