

Season by Season

Meditations about aging

date: week, month

Ministries With Older Adults



Introductory Guide*

WELCOME! I am so glad you have opened this meditation series. It is a gift to you on your life journey, for reading, pondering and growing. The seasonal meditations are ordered for each week of the month, (i.e 4th week in Aug.) so that you can read anytime in any year. Each season in the series has an extra bonus meditation for you to take up at any time.

Each entry is formatted like this page: title and week of month, commentary from my thoughts, or another author (who is always credited); a photo upon which to focus, pray or return to each day in that week.; lastly there is an explanation (behind the asterisk) for ways to prepare and begin to meditate.



Photo by Cliff Aerie

The photos are contributed in large part by my wonderful husband, Cliff, for whom I am most grateful. Many other photos are those of my friend Judy Evridge who is also an extraordinary nature photographer.

*To prepare yourself for meditation choose a comfortable seated position. Light a candle nearby or set a CD to quiet calming tones. Read first to yourself or aloud, then focus your attention on the photo, pondering the words just read for a moment or two. Conclude your time with a word of gratitude and a prayer. Use the series in the way that works best for you, and be sure to share it with others.

I would love to hear from you.

Blessings,

Jan Aerie

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December

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Advent and Christmas*

Waiting is an art that our impatient age has forgotten. It wants to break open the ripe fruit when it has hardly finished planting the shoot...whoever does not know the austere blessedness of waiting, will never experience the full blessing of fulfillment. Those who do not know how it feels to struggle anxiously with the deepest questions of life, cannot even dream of the splendor of this moment in which clarity is illuminated for them. For the greatest, most profound, tenderest things in the world, we must wait. It happens not here in the storm but according to the divine laws of sprouting, of becoming.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manger*

Here I stand and I say a prayer:

Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Enter our darkness with your light.
Come fill our emptiness with your presence...Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us.

—Celtic prayer from the Holy Island of Lindesfarne



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Blessing for the Longest Night*

All throughout these months
as the shadows have lengthened,
this blessing has been gathering itself,
making ready,
preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark,
traveling with its eyes closed,
feeling its way by memory
by touch
by the pull of the moon
even as it wanes.

So believe me when I tell you
this blessing will reach you
even if you have not light enough
to read it;
it will find you
even though you cannot
see it coming.

You will know the moment of its
arriving by your release
of the breath you have held
so long;
a loosening of the clenching
in your hands,
of the clutch around your heart;
a thinning of the darkness
that had drawn itself
around you.

This blessing does not mean

to take the night away
but it knows its hidden roads,
knows the resting spots
along the path,
knows what it means to travel
in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes,
take its hand.
Get up.

Set out on the road you cannot see.
This is the night when you can trust
that any direction you go,
you will be walking
toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson



Stock photo

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In Celebration of the New Year*

Earth teach me quiet ~ as the grasses are still with new light.
Earth teach me suffering ~ as old stones suffer with memory.
Earth teach me humility ~ as blossoms are humble with beginning.
Earth teach me caring ~ as mothers nurture their young.
Earth teach me courage ~ as the tree that stands alone.
Earth teach me limitation ~ as the ant that crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom ~ as the eagle that soars in the sky.
Earth teach me acceptance ~ as the leaves that die each fall.
Earth teach me renewal ~ as the seed that rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself ~ as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness ~ as dry fields weep with rain.
—an ancient Ute poem

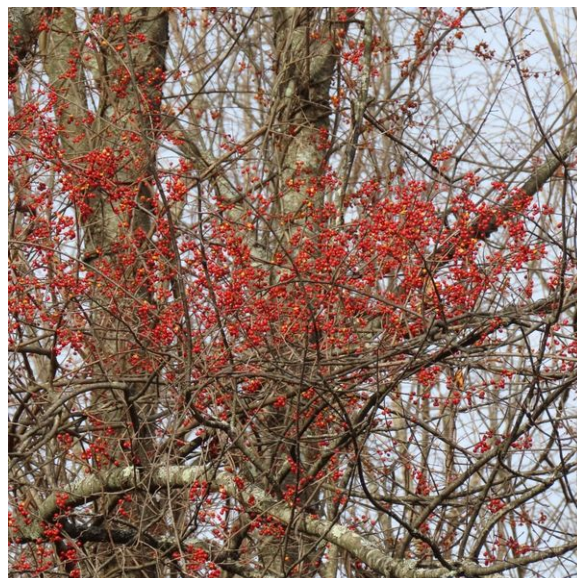


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A Time of Darkness*

Whether you are focusing on the darkness or the light this day, here are some words of comfort and hope:

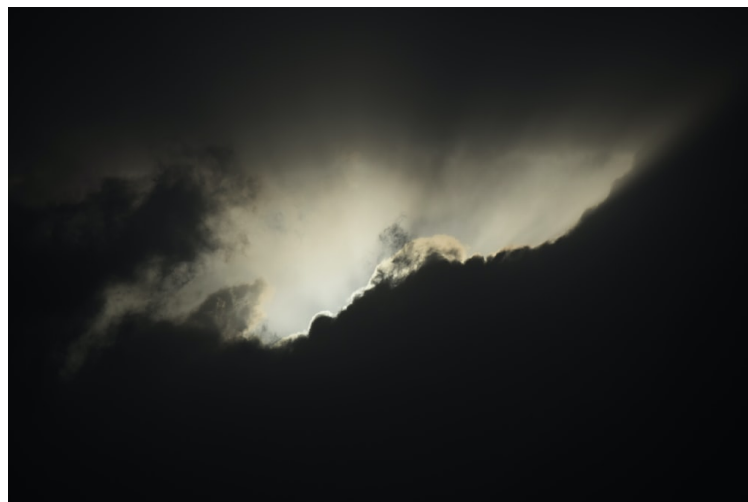
Darkness cover me like a
blanket of night
oh cover me lightly

shadows gather around me
deepening darkness
whispering softly

hold me
maker of moon light
singing thru starlight
keeper of all light

You can see deep in the dark
soil of the earth
fertile ground
bring us the light
bring us new birth.

—Sara Thompson



Stock photo

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In the Silence*

Meditating on the Word

Being silent means waiting, waiting
for the Other
to say something to us,
Being silent before God
means making room for God,
to breathe in the will of God, to listen attentively.
The time of silence is a time of responsibility,
and of blessedness,
a time when we live in the peace of God.
For God alone my soul in silence waits.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Stock photo

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To Remind Myself *

Make a place to sit down.
Sit down. Be quiet...
Accept what comes from silence.
Make the best you can of it.
Of the little words that come
out of the silence, like prayers
prayed back to the one who prays,
make a poem that does not disturb
the silence from which it came.
Accept what comes...

—Wendell Berry



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Imperfections*

Kintsugi means an embracing of the flawed or imperfect. Japanese culture values signs of wear from the use of an object. This can be seen as a reason for keeping an object around even after it has been broken, highlighting the cracks and repairs as simply an event in the life of the object rather than allowing its service to end at the time it was damaged or broken.

Not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repair is literally illuminated... a kind of physical expression of the spirit, as "no mind." This carries connotations of fully existing within the moment, of non-attachment, of equanimity amid changing conditions. The vicissitudes of existence over time, to which all humans are susceptible, could not be clearer than in the breaks, the knocks, and the shattering to which ceramicware too is subject. This poignancy or aesthetic of existence has been known in Japan as a compassionate sensitivity, or perhaps identification with, [things] outside oneself. —Christy Bartlett

Let your imperfections be your beauty this day.



Stock photo

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The Pace of Time*

How, Then, Shall We Live?

This much I have learned:
within the sorrow there is grace.
when we come close
to the things that break us down,
we touch those things that also break us open.

This is the healing point:
when we have told the story,
we can leave the story behind.
What remains is hidden wholeness,
alive and unbroken...

—Wayne Muller



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The Gift of Years*

It is important that age be no impediment to the magnet for life in us. Life is not about breathing only. Life is about becoming more than we are, about being all that we can be. The gift of years come to many who realize that these later years are a gift, not a burden. It is about the enterprise of embracing the blessings of this time and overcoming the burdens of it. That is the spiritual task of later life.

The real truth is that there is no such thing as having only one life to live. The fact is that every life is simply a series of lives, each one of them with its own task, its own flavor, its own brand of errors, its own type of sins, its own glories—all designed to lead us to the same end, happiness and a sense of fulfillment. These are the capstone years, the time in which a whole new life is in the making again. The gift of these years is not merely being alive, it is the gift of becoming more fully alive than ever. —Sister Joan Chittister



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Drop by Drop*

Slowly and steadily the water pours from the bamboo stalk into the stone basin. It is cold – refreshing in summer and biting in winter, yet it flows on. Tiny ripples and eddies may form, ever freshening the pool. God’s love for us is a steady stream of care, and compassion. God’s love for us is completely reliable and true, even when we find ourselves in the cold of winter. Put your hand in the basin, swirl the water, feel its softness. Gently remove your fingers from the bowl and marvel at the constancy of God’s loving care for YOU.



Photo by Cliff Aerie

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Breath*

Here we are in a new week. Have you followed the sunshine through your house just as a cat or dog does seeking warmth? We notice a brighter mood because of the added sunshine our body is absorbing. We may also notice our body craving the carefree summer sun this time of year. Our cares can weigh heavily and may even overshadow us. We may feel far from care-free.

Simple exercises can be helpful in situations where difficult or overwhelming feelings arise, during a challenging situation, or in preparing for one. A guided process can feel calming, help reduce tension, and help you feel less overwhelmed. Take a deep breath to relieve stress and anxiety.

Five-finger breathing: Make a fist. As you inhale through your nose, slowly uncurl your thumb and index finger. As you exhale through your mouth, slowly open your middle, ring and pinky fingers. When you exhale for longer than you inhale, your nervous system shifts into a state in which your whole body feels more peaceful.



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Outlook on Life*

One of the best lessons Mister Rogers taught children was not to stifle their emotions, a lesson that applies to adults more than ever. He embodied the idea of authentic positivity, which teaches that only when we embrace the full range of our emotions, including the so-called 'negative' feelings of anger, sadness, loneliness and fear, can we learn to walk through life with a genuinely positive outlook. Regardless of the circumstance, Rogers' commitment to faith and creativity can provide inspiration and hope during even the scariest times.

—Guideposts



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God's Eye is on the Sparrow*

It seemed like a random occurrence when I came across the page in Heather Greenwood's illustrated faith journal based on Matthew 6:25-27 about worry and anxiety. Then on the same day my friend Judy posted a series of her photos of sparrows.

Heather wrote, "What I'm learning is that I need to lose control, my own trying to control my worries and fears, in order to let God take over and gain freedom from them – **lose control and give that control to God**. I love how in just this tiny little passage we are commanded three times not to worry or be anxious...I totally laugh that I have to be reminded of this command so many times and that I'm not alone and all throughout the Bible God says not to worry or be afraid or be anxious...like seriously...when will we get it through our heads?" May you find a way to free your worries and travel through this week* with your eyes on the sparrows.

Matthew 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"



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Self-Compassion Comes First*

May there be kindness in your gaze as you look within. —John O’Donohue

Self-care is never a selfish act. It is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch. —Parker Palmer



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