

As kids, we want to be older; when weâ??re older, not so much. Contemplating our mission as we experience the stages of aging.

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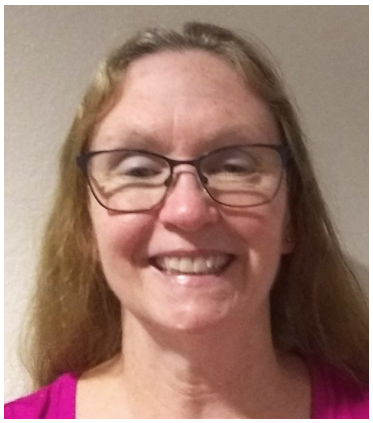
GUEST COLUMN



My husbandâ??s older cousin, Stuart, told an amusing story some years back. It went like this: As was his usual Saturday custom, he went into his local McDonaldâ??s restaurant and ordered a coffee. The cashier took his order and rang him up. â??Thatâ??ll be $1.09, sir.â?• Stuart was surprised. â??No, I think you made a mistake. That should have been $1.85.â?•

Smiling widely at Stuart, the cashier said sunnily â??Well, sir, I gave you the senior discount!â?• Stuart was flabbergasted, thinking to himself â??No, no, no! Iâ??m not a senior. Iâ??m not a senior yet!â?•

It was a funny story a few years ago. Not quite as funny to me now, I guess. Iâ??ve been retired for almost a year. This experience has changed me in many ways. And since Iâ??ve retired, Iâ??ve been thinkingâ?¦

I talked to an older friend today about this topic. She had been to the doctor yesterday to discuss some physical issues, about which she is embarrassed and emotional. The visit didnâ??t seem to bring any

resolution, with no diagnosis given. Her reactions and our conversation about them started this thought process again.

When I get to 25

The passing of years used to be a count-up. When I get to 25, I want to â?¦ fill in the dream. When Iâ??m in my 30s, Iâ??ll be doing â?¦ fill in the occupation, vacation, marriage or family status. Weâ??re busy, busy, busy!



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Then the 40s and 50s come quietly creeping in with some little signs of aging. Hmmm â?¦ is it enough gray that I need to cover it? Is that a bald spot? Where are those dratted reading glasses? I know I set them down somewhere. And those weekend warrior wounds donâ??t seem to heal up during the weekend. They now take weeks. When you have to go to the doctorâ??s office about them, the doctors begin to pepper their diagnoses with â??Well, this does happen more frequently as we age.â?•

The countdown

And then come the 60s. Suddenly, life starts to feel like a countdown. We all know what is coming, but now it is imminent. Iâ??ve lost two brothers and a brother-in-law these last four years. As I write this, two of my sisters are on their way out. It isnâ??t surprising, but it shocks us all the same.

Weâ??re hit in the face with morbid thoughts like: How much time do I (my husband, my wife, my brothers, my sisters, my friends) have left? Which one of us is going to go first? What do I do when my spouse is gone? How do I prepare for this? How do I prepare my spouse for this?

For me, and I suspect for others, too, the change in employment status and daily schedule brings up even more thoughts. What is my purpose now that Iâ??m retired from my profession? How should I spend my days now that Iâ??m not working? Do I still have anything to contribute to this family/city/country/world?

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And thereâ??s the whole bucket list idea. What experiences do I still want to have in the time I have left? And which ones can I still physically do? Is it responsible to spend my time on my bucket list? Is it a selfish waste of the time I have left? An oft-repeated quote from the Old Testament is: â??That which is done is what will be done. And there is nothing new under the sun.â?•

The missionâ??s the same

I know my experience is not unique. But it feels unique. With the anti-aging sentiment that is part of the American culture, we donâ??t openly talk about these things, do we?

With all of my ruminations, what conclusions have I come to about this life season?

One thing I know is that sharing what gifts I have been given is still the thing to do. Use what I have to encourage and enrich others. That hasnâ??t changed. Look for opportunities to help others. Another no-brainer. Continue to learn. As I used to tell my students, â??Be lifelong learners.â?• There are multiple avenues for this every day. Grab them and add to your knowledge.

The final piece of truth Iâ??ve begun to understand is that the mission hasnâ??t changed, just the circumstances in which we fulfill it.

Category

1. All Posts

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