

Life isn't life until you give it away

Here we sit on the cusp of a new season. A time to say good-bye to the slower activities of summer, days spent by the water, hours puttering about the garden and all the pleasurable moments of warm weather, sunshine and holidays.

It is time to say hello to the routines of the rest of the year. The children are back to school, teachers back to work, and everything seems to be back into routine again. Not too many of us want to admit that we like the security of routine. We would like to describe ourselves as much more adventurous, embracing the changes and looking for novelty all the time, but it is actually the routine that comforts us, gives us continuing purpose and organizes lives that can become scattered.

Perhaps your routine includes regular working hours. Perhaps it includes monthly meetings of various organizations for pleasure or as community involvement. Perhaps your routine includes time for person fitness; walking, hiking or working out at the gym. Perhaps your routine includes visiting older relatives who don't get out much or you spend time caring for grandchildren. Our routines form the backbone the way in which we use our time.

Routines are comforting and useful but sometimes they can become a burden if they are too demanding or they become a trap that holds us back from re-evaluating how we could better spend our time. We only have so much time and we want to spend it well.

The beginning of a new school year and the season of autumn is a good time to pause, before those routines become completely ingrained, and think about the gift of time that we have been given. Jesus, the teacher, talks about losing your life in order to gain it. We can think of that as giving your life away so that you have really lived. Think about the many ways you have been giving your life away. In youth, you likely gave your life away helping out your family. You gave away your life to your friends so they had fun in your company and so did you. If you are an older person, think about how you gave away your life to earn a living to provide for yourself and your family. You gave away your life to spend time with your children. They took that time eagerly. You may give away your life to causes that are important to you.

How are you giving away your life right now? Do you belong to any service groups that benefit the community? Do you give some time to elderly relatives who may be lonely? Do you give away your life to your children and grandchildren? Do you coach a sports team or volunteer at your child's school? Do you have a cause or special charity to which you are devoting some of the time of your life? Do you give time to truly listening to your friends and family, even strangers when they really need someone to talk to?

Your life, the time you have to spend on this earth was given to you for free. It is a gift of our Creator. You have an opportunity to use this free gift to benefit others as well as yourself. Perhaps you are already thinking about new and interesting things to do to give away your life. If not, as we return to the routine of regular life in the autumn and winter seasons, I encourage you to think about ways in which you could bring the gift of life to others. As you give away your gift of life I believe you feel that you have truly lived.

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