

Keswick Convention 2025 - A transformed vision for retirement

Session 1 - Navigating life changes in the light of eternity.

A long life has its seasons and we are called to continuing fruitfulness as followers of Christ, despite the changing times and the passing of the years. How can we try to understand the season we are living in now and how can we prepare now for the new seasons that are to come? How can we navigate the coming life changes in a godly and Christ-honouring way?

.....He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. Psalm 1:1-4

The righteous flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him. Psalm 92:12-15

The seasons of life change under God's providential purposes and rule. The tree cannot fight the seasons, it must adapt, adjust and learn a new way to be. Each season is, in its different way, a celebration of life.

The seasons of autumn

Beyond retirement most of us are in the seasons of autumn, which might be divided into 'early-autumn' and 'late-autumn'. In God's goodness and faithfulness both seasons can be characterised by *fruitfulness* and *generosity*.

As the seasons of life change, what is unchanging?

1. Where we are planted - in the courts of our God.
2. The continual daily nourishment of the stream of living water.

Fruitfulness comes as we strengthen our roots in God and we drink deep of the daily living water. God's plan for our old age is that we should be 'full of sap and green'. The literal Hebrew of Ps 92:14 is '*they are juicy and fresh*'. This implies celebration, new life, internal renewal, hopefulness, energy despite old age.

This is the internal spiritual reality of drinking deeply of the living water. The external gift for others is fruitfulness. This is a season for generosity. Bearing and passing on fruit for the good of others.

Early-autumn is for many a season of **active fruitfulness**. We have energy, availability, time, reasonable health and resources. It's a season for generosity. Bearing fruit and passing it on to others. Being prepared to serve others and a willingness to be unseen and to fade into the background. Generosity and open-handedness means a preparedness to share what we have, to give without stinginess, to be concerned to serve others rather than to cling on to what we have.

"Fruit is not for the glorification of trees. It is for sharing. Fruit is by its nature a generous gift."
Christopher Chapman

Exercising hope: "Gardeners are hopeful people though they experience regular defeats. They sow for the future and they live among the wonder of growth." Christopher Chapman

In **late-autumn**, our energy and resources are diminished, we become less active and more dependent on others. This is a time of **dependent fruitfulness**. But we can still remain internally '*juicy and fresh*' and we

can continue to be fruitful, with open-handed generosity, gratitude, concern for others and prayerfulness right up until the point when we fall asleep in Christ.

What does fruitfulness in the seasons of autumn look like?

- **Prayerfulness**, especially for the younger generations
- **A listening ear and increased availability for others**
- **Investing in deep intergenerational friendships / investing in the next generation**
- **Offering life wisdom in a non-judgemental way** - including our experiences of going through the deep waters of suffering, failure and bereavement.
- **Sharing our faith and hope in Christ with others**
- **Expressing gratitude and thankfulness** - especially for the smaller and frequently ignored blessings of creation, family and human friendship.
- **Providing positive models of 'letting go' graciously**
- **Hopefulness** - constantly pointing to the resurrection and new creation
- **Leaving behind a legacy of wisdom and a testimony to God's character and faithfulness over a long life.**

In the Bible, trees are symbols of life - especially the tree of life planted in the centre of the garden (Genesis 2:9) which recurs in Revelation 22:2 "On either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Perhaps each of us is called to be a tiny replica or image of the great tree of life, continually yielding fruit and bring healing to others. We are created in the image of a fruitful and generous God and as we grow into this season we are called to learn more about his goodness and generosity. We allow the fruit that God brings from us to fall, as good seed which is passed onto others: allowing the seed to fall to the ground in hope and trust of God's goodness and life-giving activity.

Satisfied

Ps 104:16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly (lit Hebrew *saba* satisfied).

Ps 107:8 He satisfies (*saba*) the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

Ps 17:5 When I awake I shall be satisfied (*saba*) with seeing your likeness.

Is 53:10-11 He shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his day; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied (*saba*).

As we are increasingly satisfied by the goodness of God, the more fruit we have to pass on to others.

"The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet". Frederick Buechner

Some resources

The Final Lap: Navigating the transitions of later life. John Wyatt, 10ofthose

Finishing well: A God's eye view of ageing. Ian Knox, SPCK

Earthed in God: four movements of spiritual growth. Christopher Chapman, Canterbury

The Gift of Years: Growing old gracefully. Joan Chittister, Bluebridge

Pioneering the third age. Rob Merchant, CARE

Transforming friendship: Investing in the Next Generation - Lessons from John Stott and others Kindle Edition. John Wyatt, IVP

Retiring Well Course. Helen Calder <https://www.helensheadlines.net/transitions-retirement-course>

Faith in Later Life: resource hub. <https://faithinlaterlife.org/resource-hub/>