

“Cast Into the Falling Tide”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for 1st UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, September 8, 2024

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website or by clicking this link and finding the date of the worship service in which it appears:

<https://www.christianworldmedia.com/wordstream/fumcgj/search:->

Scripture Text: Psalm 84:5-7 [NIV]

With frequent reference to *From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life* by Arthur C. Brooks (New York: Portfolio / Penguin, 2022)

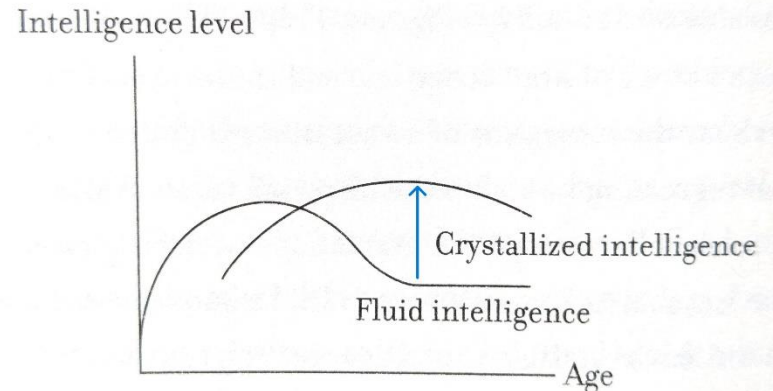
And reference to *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (2nd ed.) by William Bridges, Ph.D. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press / Perseus Books Group, 2004)

OPENING

(*The metaphor of the falling tide [Brooks' fishing story, pp. 189-191]*)

SERMON THOUGHTS

- The connection to our theme? “There is a falling tide to life: the transition from [what we’ve been talking about as] ‘fluid’ to ‘crystallized’ intelligence” [Brooks, p. 190].



- The blue arrow represents doing the inner work that Brooks describes in *From Strength to Strength*, some of which we’ve talked about. And the potential for greater happiness in the second half of life is represented in the distance b/w the curves.

But the falling tide of life is scary and difficult, and jumping to the second curve, the crystallized intelligence curve, can be downright terrifying – not unlike my experience years ago on a high ropes challenge course...

ILLUSTRATION The story of “the jump” from the (limitations of the) platform to the trapeze bar about 30 feet off the ground!

- The problem isn’t the destination; it’s the in-between – Making peace with *liminality* [Brooks, pp. 191ff]. (*Refer here to the process / stages in Wm. Bridges’ *Transitions*, pp. 107-175*)

→ Bridges' Stages of Transition

1. Endings
2. The Neutral Zone
3. New Beginnings

→ This process takes time, sometimes not much and sometimes quite a while. But it always takes time. Accept and embrace it as best you can. But at some point, you have to decide whether you're going to cleave to the security of the platform, accepting its incredible limitations, OR jump to the second curve.

→ Back to *From Strength to Strength*

Brooks identifies "four lessons" for helping with this, and I would point you in his direction, if you want to read about them.

But at the beginning of the worship series, I said that this was *not* a recipe book, a "how to negotiate the second half of life successfully in 5 easy steps" kind of thing. I said it was much more like a coffee table book, full of pictures of delicious dishes from around the world, most of which you could never make at home. But that wasn't the point. The point was that those pictures have the power to stir your appetite for things you *do* enjoy and *would like to try* at home.

→ The value I find in Brooks' *From Strength to Strength* has more to do with *inspiration* than *instruction*, more to do with *wisdom* than with

information. That is, they help me to envision the second half of my life – which I am clearly in the midst of – in ways that help me to embrace the changes I notice now AND those that are yet to come, turning my weaknesses into strengths, just like Paul pointed us to last week in 2 Corinthians 12.

- Brooks' conclusion: Seven Words to Remember (for the second-half of life)
 1. *Use things*
 2. *Love people*
 3. *Worship the divine* [Brooks, p. 215]

(*A bit of reflection on these words...In the first ½ of life, we often invert 1 & 2 and worship "success".*)

CONCLUSION: Wisdom from Psalm 84:5-7

I want to bring this sermon to a close by going back to the Scripture passage for today.

⁵ *Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.*

⁶ *As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.*

⁷ *They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.*

(*Reminder of the linguistics and the beauty of verse 6, especially.*)

Metaphorically, verse 6 describes what happens when we make the jump from the *fluid intelligence* curve to

the *crystallized intelligence* curve in the second half of our lives. What was experienced as a Valley of Tears becomes a place of living water in our lives.

And we end up going *from strength to strength* until we find our ultimate fulfillment “standing before God in Zion”. And THAT, my friends, is truly GOOD NEWS!

Let us pray...