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The Five Invitations: Discovering What Death Can Teach Us About Living Fully


THE FIVE
INVITATIONS
Discovering What Death
Can Teach Us About Living Fully
FRANK OSTASESKI
Foreword by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD

Frank Ostaseski. 2017. Flatiron Books. 304p.

Ostaseski was cofounder of the first buddhist hospice in the USA, and in this book he distils lessons from serving thousands of people at the end of their lives.

The ‘five invitations’ are (1) Don’t wait; (2) Welcome everything, push away nothing; (3) Bring your whole self to the experience; (4) Find a place of rest in the middle of things; and (5) Cultivate don’t know mind. Ostaseski elaborates these and shows how they are valuable at any stage of life, drawing upon his experience which also included recovering from childhood abuse.

The book outlines the importance of forgiveness and emphasizes how ‘serving’ is always mutually beneficial rather than trying to ‘help’ or ‘fix’ which imply weakness or things are broken. While there may be endless suffering in the world, Ostaseski suggests there is also endless potential for love and compassion to respond.

The Five Invitations provides a humane manifesto arguing for a non-judgmental approach and simplicity, where we should humbly appreciate the silences and ‘in-between’ places in life. Citing Nisargadatta Maharaj, “Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. Between the two, my life flows.”

Book homepage

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Translation disclaimer: Content originally written in English.