

## Ageless in the Lord and Self-Love

*Ageless in the Lord: A condition of the soul that emerges in one's illumination years (65 and up) as one's advancing relationship with God becomes the primary life motivation and goal.*

A healthy self-love is an essential ingredient for the emergence of the life condition of agelessness. In their book Christian Adulthood, authors Whitehead and Whitehead use the term self-intimacy to describe one's ever evolving and deepening knowledge about and acceptance of self.

As I reflect on my life it becomes clearer to me that my life has been an ongoing challenge to change. I change physically, psychologically and spiritually. When this change moves me closer to my essential self, ie., my real self, then this change is positive, constructive and additive. On the other hand, when I refuse or fail to grow, then I remain mired in my false self or ego.

There are two fundamental ways to change. The first is captured in the word conversion. I recognize that the way I am perceiving, or thinking, or feeling or behaving is somehow detrimental to me and I need to turn away from it. The second type of change might be called integrative change, and this is the change that is most instructive in our illumination years. Integrative change is when I come to the conclusion that I cannot change something that I would like to change about myself. Here, I come to accept as permanent those parts of me that I may dislike but cannot change. I come to embrace that I am who I am, I am not some preferred other; I am not some image of perfection that I would like to be, I am my imperfect self. Integrative change means I embrace the fullness of this imperfect self and come to love it as God loves it. Such an embrace does not excuse me from wrongdoing, yet it does render an immense consolation of heart that evokes a newness in me that is good. I am perfectly imperfect as this one and only rendition of the love of God.

Becoming Ageless in the Lord requires me to walk the path of integrative change. I cannot be other than who I am, and it is this 'who' that God loves. God is the great "I AM" and I am, at my soul level, a reflection of this

great I AM. I come to love myself, my real self (as opposed to my ego self) in ways that I never have before.

Change is the watchword of the universe... God's sacred creation. My life is a call to enter this evolving change. My illumination years provide me with new insight so I can see my essential worthiness, my fundamental value and my sacred core... how could these be anything but goo? When I move in this direction I enter into a healthy self-love... a foretaste of the Holy-of-Holies in my soul. I am now growing/changing into Ageless in the Lord.

Striving to live a virtuous life,

Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D.

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