

Active and  
passive spirituality



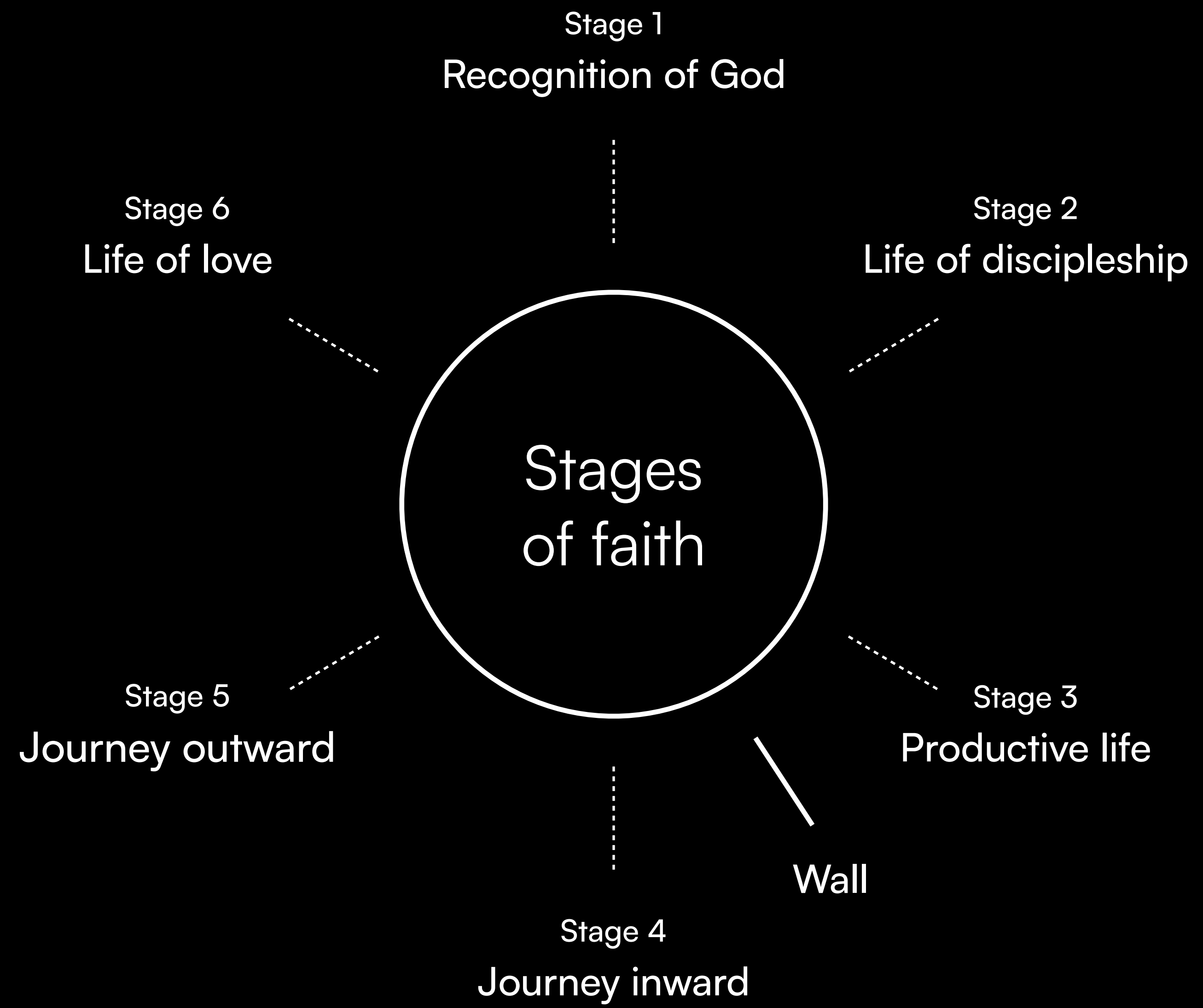
Getting your  
life together



Giving your  
life away

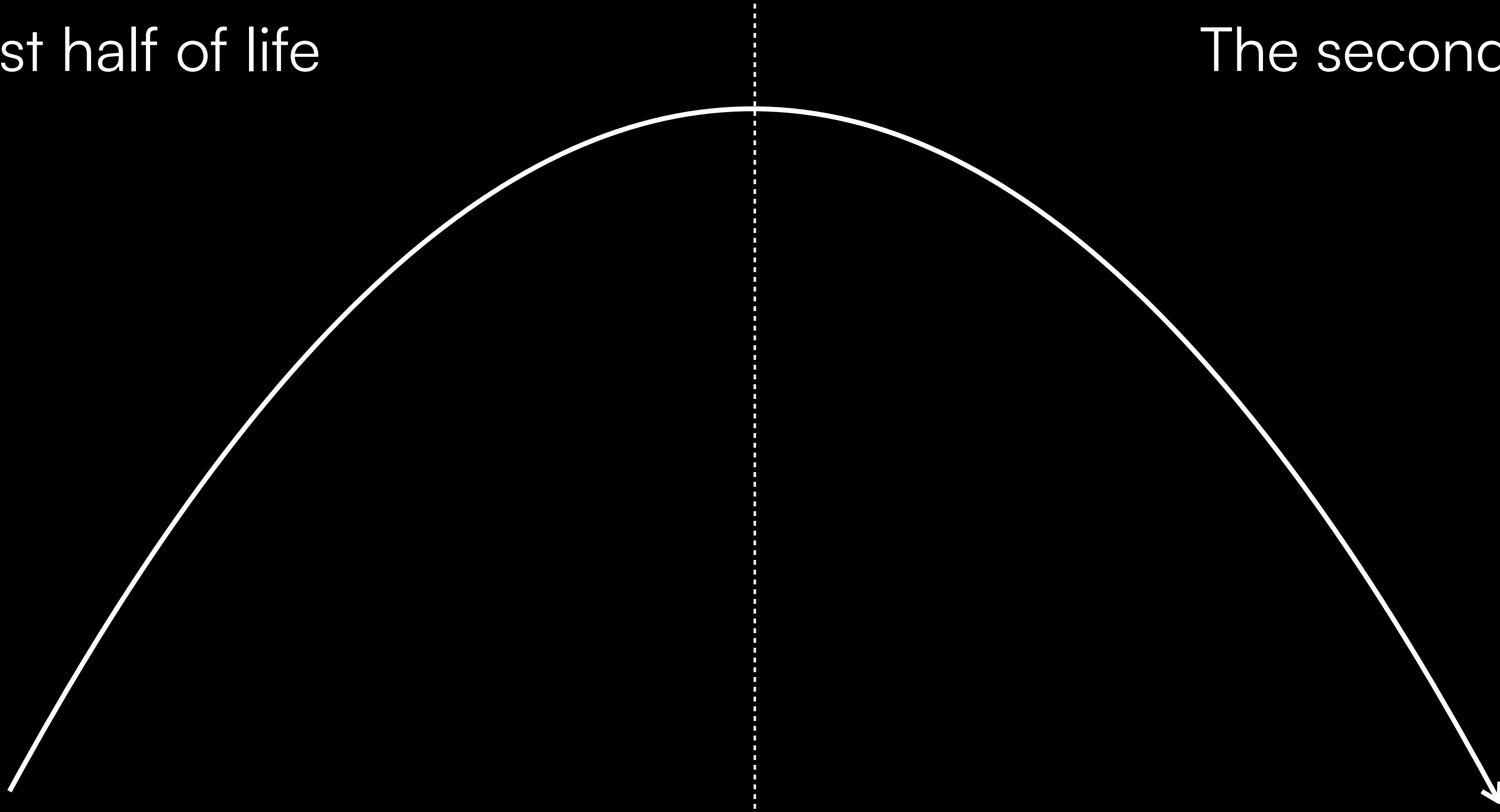


Giving your  
death away



The first half of life

The second half of life



“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

—John 21v18-19

Active and passive spirituality

Active

“The active dimension of the spiritual life consists of what *feels* like one’s initiative, choice, or effort. The passive dimension *seems* to be more initiated and carried out by God.”

—Gerald May



Passive

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—Gerald May

“A deep inner posture of joyful release of our life and being to God in absolute trust, without demands, without conditions, without reservations. It is neither a passive resignation nor a fatalistic acquiescence to whatever comes. It is, rather, a consistent posture of actively turning our whole being to God so that God’s presence, purpose and power can be released through our lives into all situations.”

—Robert Mulholland

Active spirituality is really important.

Active spirituality will only take you so far..

“Regardless of how a compulsion appears externally, underneath it is always robbing us of our freedom. We act not because we have chosen to, but because we have to. We cling to things, people, beliefs, and behaviors not because we love them, but because we are terrified of losing them... In a spiritual sense, the objects of our attachments and addictions become *idols*.

We give them our time, energy, and attention whether we want to or not, even — and often especially — when we are struggling to rid ourselves of them. We want to be free, compassionate, and happy, but in the face of our attachments we are clinging, grasping, and fearfully self-absorbed. This is the root of our trouble.”

—Gerald May

“To reach satisfaction in all,  
desire satisfaction in nothing.

To come to possess all,  
desire the possession of nothing.

To arrive at being all,  
desire to be nothing.”

—St. John of the Cross



“Let nothing disturb you,  
Let nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing away:  
God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things  
Whoever has God lacks nothing;  
God alone suffices.”

—St. Teresa of Avila

We progress on the spiritual journey by a simple combination of the two.

“Would to God that... all men could know how very easy it would be for them to arrive at a high degree of sanctity. They would only have to fulfill the simple duties of Christianity and of their state of life; to embrace with submission the crosses belonging to that state, and to submit with faith and love to the designs of Providence...

The passive part of sanctity is still more easy since it only consists in accepting that which we very often have no power to prevent, and in suffering lovingly, that is to say, with sweetness and consolation, those things that too often cause weariness and disgust. Once more, I repeat, in this consists sanctity.”

—Jean Pierre de Caussade

As a general rule, the first half of life is more active, and the second is more passive.

Acceptance is not acquiescence.

“Most problems are psychological in nature. But, in fact, most solutions are spiritual. Therefore we have to eventually move from trying to solve them (which is good and needed) to knowing that we cannot finally solve them at the level that matters. Maybe we can only forgive them, embrace them, or weep over them.”

—Richard Rohr

“God, give me the grace to accept with serenity

The things that cannot be changed

Courage to change the things which should  
be changed

And the wisdom to distinguish

The one from the other.

Living one day at a time,

Enjoying one moment at a time,

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,



Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is  
Not as I would have it  
Trusting that you will make all things right  
If I surrender to your will  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with you forever  
In the next.  
Amen.”

—Reinhold Niebuhr  
*Serenity Prayer*

1. Make space
2. Move toward the pain
3. Accept the invitations of Jesus in your stage and season

“We mature by meeting life, just as God and nature designed it, and accepting there the invitations that beckon us ever deeper into the heart of life itself. But that is a simple cliché, more easily said than done, because as we go through the seasons of our lives the challenges we meet there can just as easily embitter and harden the soul as mellow it.”

—Ronald Rohlheiser