a matter of life and death

Foreword by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

60 Voices Share Their Wisdom

Rosalind Bradley
Sufi poet Rumi – written on his shrine:

“Come, come whoever you are! Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving. It doesn’t matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come - even if you have broken your vow a thousand times. Come yet again, come, come.”
Mysteries, Yes by Mary Oliver

....how two hands touch and the bonds will never be broken. How people come, from delight or the scars of damage, to the comfort of a poem....
Let me keep my distance, always, from those who think they have the answers...
— chosen by Deb de Wilde, obstetric social worker, Mater

Late Fragment by Raymond Carver:

And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself Beloved on the earth.

- Chosen Rev Canon Rosie Harper,
Arabella Dorman
“Struggle to survive” 2014 Afghanistan
Tribute in Lights, 9/11
5 sections

1. PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH DEATH
   – Lives reshaped after gradual/sudden death:
     Gail O’Brien, Mitchell Willoughby, Prof Patrick McGorry AO

2. DEATH BRINGS US WISDOM – express deep insights into living; the paradox of living and dying is explored; embracing death as part of life –, Dr Michael Barbato, Therese Schroeder-Sheker, Rev Canon Rosie Harper, Deathtalker – Molly Carlile
3. WORKING CLOSELY WITH DEATH – how people cope + understand this subject
obstetric social worker, ICU staff, coroner

4. THE CYCLE OF LIFE- Death is part of our natural life cycle – a guide to the living –
Obituarist, art therapist, mortician

5. DEATH IS SACRED – views from a multifaith + multicultural perspective –
Jewish, Muslim, Hindu; Aboriginal, PNG, Indian: Ela Gandhi
I can't see Mother—therefore she does not exist.

No. Sometimes in the silence I can hear her.

We are preparing for that reality when it comes.
WHAT DID I FIND IN THIS BOOK?
I found there was no one way to consider death.

All contributions are STRIKINGLY DIFFERENT yet there are some COMMON THEMES:

– Accepting + preparing for death
– Impermanence
– Meaningful life/embracing life to the full
Mitchell Willoughby
Mitchell Willoughby

• His story epitomizes how to accept death, prepare for it and live a meaningful life.

• He took responsibility of what he had done “I have to carry it ...I literally had to take my life apart and rebuild it to see who I am. I had no one left to face except myself.”

• He became a Buddhist “My practice has helped me make the best of an awful situation. That’s the reality. I have to own up to it and face it daily.”

• He enjoys helping others, “because I can.”
Preparing for death - Josefine Speyer

Michel de Montaigne, 16c. French philosopher:

“Let us deprive death of its strangeness, let us frequent it, let us get used to it”

Josefine:

“At the end of their lives people want to feel that they are loved, that their work is done, that they can forgive themselves and others. They want to feel at peace. That is part of a good death. It is also what we need to have a good life. So, in the end making friends with death is making friends with life.”
Sughra Ahmed
“My soul is at ease when reading this poem...”

[Rumi- *Come. Come whoever you are!*]

**Sughra:** It reminds me in very few lines that the Hereafter is a place of solace, compassion and love...

My belief in the Hereafter is important to me, along with my belief in a God who is loving, compassionate and forgiving. It is at the core of my understanding of the linear journey my soul is taking.... By coming to know myself, I come to know my Lord. Hence I am able to make some sense of the journey of those who leave this world for the next.”
Rev Peter Pereira
Impermanence – “I have learnt that much of what I value in life is only of a temporary nature. ...To idolise it and to set in concrete as some kind of monument is pointless and ultimately quite egotistical. At some point we all need to go through the grief of letting go of what our egos want to cling onto as important. I confess I am still journeying with this grief.” [p.62]

Gratitude – grateful for friends and family

Strengthening of spirit – “My faith has told me that life continues to have value. We only ever have the moment and each moment can be viewed as a gift. God is present in life and death and beyond death.”

He sees a greater enemy the cultural pretense of denying death.
How has it affected me?More than I expected!

• More confident in talking about this subject
• Less fearful: thinking, talking, reading, writing = learning about death
• Living more authentically -
• what is REALLY important to me in my life:
  – my relationships:
    • more sensitive
    • express gratitude
    • to not leave the love unsaid
  – end-of-life care wishes: advance care directives, funeral....
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Rosalind Bradley
Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu quotes Dag Hammarskjöld:

“Do not seek death; death will find you but seek the road which makes death a fulfillment.”