



On Our Way: The Final Passage through Life and Death (Life Passages)

Robert Kastenbaum

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How do our ideas about dying influence the way we live? Life has often been envisioned as a journey, the river of time carrying us inexorably toward the unknown country—and in our day we increasingly turn to myth and magic, ritual and virtual reality, cloning and cryostasis in the hope of eluding the reality of the inevitable end. In this book a preeminent and eminently wise writer on death and dying proposes a new way of understanding our last transition. A fresh exploration of the final passage through life and perhaps through death, his work deftly interweaves historical and contemporary experiences and reflections to demonstrate that we are always on our way.

Drawing on a remarkable range of observations—from psychology, anthropology, religion, biology, and personal experience—Robert Kastenbaum re-envision's life's forward-looking progress, from early-childhood bedtime rituals to the many small rehearsals we stage for our final separation. Along the way he illuminates such moments and ideas as becoming a "corpsed person," going down to earth or up in flames, respecting or abusing (and eating) the dead, coping with "too many dead," conceiving and achieving a "good death," undertaking the journey of the dead, and learning to live through the scrimmage of daily life fully knowing that Eternity does not really come in a designer flask. Profound, insightful, often moving, this look at death as many cultures await it or approach it enriches our understanding of life as a never-ending passage.

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