

Application Guide

JIM COLLINS ON WHAT TO MAKE OF A LIFE, PART 2



BOTTOM LINE:

A meaningful life is built by discovering your encodings, choosing responsibilities that matter, and keeping your inner fire burning bright, long, and late.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. Bringing your life into frame requires three key elements working together.
 - A. **Discovering your encodings:** Pay attention to the activities that consistently energize and draw you forward in order to understand what you are uniquely wired to do.
 - B. **Flipping the arrow of money:** Rather than doing your job primarily to make money, generate economic fuel that allows you to do what you are wired to do.
 1. It could be as simple as working at one place to make money, while also getting your career of passion going on the side.
 2. It could be that you get really good at building a little flywheel, where doing what you're passionate about generates fuel to do more of that work.
 3. You could start a social organization that actually has resources behind it.
 - C. **Feeding the inner fire:** Meaningful work fuels long-term energy and engagement.
- II. Your most meaningful work may still be ahead of you.
 - A. Our culture often assumes our best, most creative, most energetic years occur early in life, but Jim's research suggests otherwise.
 1. Meryl Streep received roughly half of her Oscar nominations after age 50, and she was just as productive in acting in her 60s as she was in her 30s.
 2. If you take all the pages in the major biographies of Benjamin Franklin, 53% cover points in his life after he hits age 60.
 - B. Later seasons of life can become seasons of increased wisdom, contribution, and creativity.
- III. To keep looking forward and keep your inner fire burning practice the notion of **extending out and circling back**.
 - A. **Extend Out:** Explore new opportunities, learn new skills, and push into unfamiliar territory.
 - B. **Circle Back:** Stay connected to the core passions and abilities that have always defined you.
 - C. Growth happens when exploration and continuity work together.
- IV. Freedom is not the absence of responsibility; true freedom is the ability to **choose what you will be responsible for** and making yourself accountable to it.
 - A. The people who change the world and make an impact are the people who have chosen a responsibility for something beyond their own individual success or comfort. They are consistently centered on making some part of the world or somebody in the world better.
 - B. Choosing responsibility beyond yourself is the catalyst to level five leadership. Level five leaders are those who have the personal humility and indomitable will for something that isn't about them.
- V. Legacy is often a distraction from what matters most that's right in front of you.
 - A. Many people become preoccupied with how they will be remembered, which pulls attention away from present responsibilities.
 - B. A life of purpose requires staying pointed forward. Don't spend your life looking backward.
 - C. Legacy is simply the byproduct of faithfully carrying today's responsibilities

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VI. Questions create clarity and can help bring our lives back into frame by exposing assumptions and revealing next steps.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. What activities or responsibilities consistently energize you and make you feel most alive?
2. What responsibility have you chosen that extends beyond your own success, comfort, or recognition?
3. Where might you need to “extend out” and try something new?
4. When you think about the years ahead, are you more focused on your legacy or your responsibilities?
5. If the most meaningful work of your life is still ahead of you, how would that change the way you approach this season?
6. What is one next step you can take to bring your life more fully into frame?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

[*What to Make of a Life* by Jim Collins](#)

[*Built to Last* by Jim Collins](#)

[*Good to Great* by Jim Collins](#)

[*How the Mighty Fall* by Jim Collins](#)

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