

# The Dispatch

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Family Business Insight for your Agriculture Company

February 2023: Success in the Second Half of Life

As a young professional still in his 30s, I may seem to be the last person to introduce an issue of the Dispatch that talks about the second half of life. However, I think that the perspective of looking ahead provides a brighter lens to see and hear the writings by Lance, Davon, and Bill. Each provides guidance that adds to my journey and, I hope, to yours. Lance provides a data-driven assessment of what leads to happiness in the second half of life. Davon focuses more on how to be true to her own mission statement. Bill's Biblical reflection focuses on something very important for him from I Samuel. Our hope for you is that you recognize and acknowledge that the next chapter of your journey can be fruitful. -[Ethan](#)

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## When it comes to your happiness, what really matters?

[Lance Woodbury](#)

[The Harvard Study of Adult Development](#) is an 85-year study chronicling the factors that contribute to our well-being. The project has tracked an original group of 724 members and over 1,300 of their descendants. The one factor that continually contributes to health and happiness, over everything else (including a good diet, low cholesterol, money, job satisfaction, etc.), is **good relationships**.

Being in the company of others, whether it be your spouse or partner or good friends, offers a “buffering effect” from difficult events or bad moods. Furthermore, “the people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50, were the healthiest, mentally and physically, at age 80.” Relationships are both a preventer of problems, and a predictor of pleasure!

In the [Wall Street Journal article](#) that summarized the study, the authors point out that the average adult in 2018 spent 11 hours per day interacting with media (and that was pre-pandemic!), which equates to 18 years of waking time over 40 years. In contrast, I figure that if you spent a solid half-day, *every month*, with a good friend, it would amount to only 35 weeks over that same 40 years.

If relationships with people make all the difference, our priorities probably don't reflect it. This study, coupled with several books I've reviewed, provided me with an alarming wake up call: spend more time with family and friends!

Many of you work with family members in a tight-knit rural community, but still feel very lonely. The lesson from the Harvard study is that your future happiness depends, in large part, on your efforts to reach out, connect with others, and cultivate warm relationships. Spend time with your spouse or partner, with industry colleagues or old acquaintances, or with a group of close friends. Your future self will thank you!

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## Entering the Second Half

[Davon Cook](#)

When I was in my thirties, I recall thinking, “This is the perfect age professionally. I'm still energetic and smart, but I have enough experience to have credibility.” Well, I just turned 50, exactly one month after becoming an empty nester. I am still energetic and a smart *some days*, but I definitely notice that the recovery time from intense weeks of work is increasing!

Lance has written [previously](#) about Arthur Brooks' book *From Strength to Strength*. Several of the concepts are

playing out with me at this time of transition, even though I didn't do them prescriptively. While I don't feel my fluid intelligence (a.k.a. raw intellectual power) diminishing yet, I am willing to accept the premise that it will (or is!). As I train successors and consult with many different families, I am valuing my crystallized intelligence (knowledge gained from past experiences) even more in everyday work. I'm wondering what my "best use" will be in the last twenty years of my career. But also, I am reflecting on where I want that life wisdom to have impact beyond work. What organizations or causes or individuals can use that experience?

Relationships are certainly in transition as an empty nester. I find myself missing the casual interactions of school events; I am prioritizing more scheduled interactions. And to round out Brooks' recommendation to focus on spirituality, I am reengaging at church after a burnout hiatus that was followed by covid disruptions.

As I reflected on the concepts, I realized they directly relate to my personal mission statement of, "Bloom where you are planted. And tend to others so they can do the same." I have bloomed in a lot of different 'plantings'; perhaps the focus of future years shifts to the latter of guiding and helping others do bloom.

What are your goals for this 'stage' of life?

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## Success and Well-Chosen Word, I Samuel 3:19

[Bill Long](#)

I celebrated my 70th birthday in May 2022. I am definitely in the second half of life. But after that birthday, I found myself asking, "Well, what's next?" I realized I was probing the subject of this month's Dispatch even though I wasn't phrasing it that way. Now, nine months later, I am ready to discuss what "success" looks like for my remaining days.

I affirm, with Lance and Davon, the centrality of relationships that grow sweeter with time, but there was something more that I wanted to accomplish. Yet, I had trouble putting my finger on it. Then, as I was reading the Scripture, I came across this promise of God to Samuel, "As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (I Sam 3:19). I immediately knew that the unusual phrasing of that sentence was, in fact, God's word to me. It talked about the value of words.

As I read about Samuel, I marveled at the way his words seemed to "stick" with people. They didn't "fall to the ground," useless. I have thought that if there was anything that would be my greatest desire or success, it would be that a *few* of my words don't fall to the ground. It would be wonderful to think that words of encouragement, of interpretation, of creative expression, of proclamation might last. That, then, is my definition of success in life's second half: that my words don't fall to the ground.