



BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR AGING ADULTS

HCC Senior Care Matters Conference

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BUNION PADS, LINAMENT,
READING GLASSES, HOT WATER BOTTLE,
BLANKET, HEART PILLS AND LAXITIVES...
OKAY...LET'S GO GROCERY SHOPPING!



LIFE AS I SEE IT-FEEL IT-LIVE IT-WELCOME TO IT...

How Do We Think About the Elderly?

- Physically weak?
- Prone to illness?
- Cognitive decline?
- Dependent?
- Lonely and isolated?
- Challenge for the family?

Reference:

- Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, Rob Green, *The Gospel For Disordered Lives*

How Does the Bible Talk About the Elderly

- *Proverbs 16:31, “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”*
- *Proverbs 20:29, “The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.”*
 - The Bible describes old age with honor and glory.
 - The world might look at growing old from a negative point of view, but it is a blessing from God.
- As caregivers, we need to have a healthy view of aging ourselves.

- *“To resist [aging] seems to me a kind of unbelief that heaven is really good, and living a long time with God is good, and having the experience and the age to care in deeper ways for the young and share life-wisdom with them is good. . . . It is good to grow old with God.”* (John Piper)
- Aging under God’s care is a gift and a blessing.

Paul's Example

- *2 Timothy 4:6-8, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day..."*
- A life lived well for God is a beautiful thing. Like Paul to Timothy, it's a tremendous blessing to the church and an example.

Common Challenges Aging Adults Face

Accelerated Physical Decline

Grieving the Deaths of a Spouse, friends, and Family Members

Perceived Loss of Purpose, Control, and Usefulness

Guilt or Regrets over the Past

1. Accelerated Physical Decline

Increase likelihood to develop serious illness such as cancer, strokes or heart diseases

Decrease bone density and muscle mass

Slowing of metabolism, weakening of immune system

Neurological decline (memory loss, vision and hearing loss)

- Helping aging adults to grow in their dependence on God
 - *Ps 71:8-9, “My mouth is full of praise and honor to you all day long. Don’t discard me in my old age. As my strength fails, do not abandon me.”*
- Not just for aging adults, but even as caretakers, we need to recognize and grow our dependence.
- We all need to recognize our limitations.

- Theologian J. I. Packer writes, “Maintaining zeal Godward as our bodies wear out is the special discipline to which we aging Christians are called. Realism requires us to remember that memory, particularly short-term memory, will weaken; logical tightness of speech will loosen; powers of concentration will diminish; physical exhaustion will overtake us sooner or later, and energy levels will keep going lower. Zeal, however, should be unflagging every day, all day, and all the way.” (*Finishing Our Course with Joy*, page 76-77)

- Encourage older believers that even though their physical body is declining, their inner being is energized and renewed by God daily.
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”
- Our physical ability peaked in our 20’s or 30’s, but our sanctification continues throughout our life. By God’s grace, we grow to be more like Christ
- 1 Timothy 4:7-8, “... Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

2. Grieving the Deaths of a Spouse, friends, and Family Members

Aging believers, if married, might suffer watching the physical decline and death of their spouse and the associated grief and loneliness.

Older adults will face the loss of friends and family members.

As we age, we will begin to attend more funerals than weddings.

- Grief is a normal response. Normalize grief and prevent seniors become depressed or frustrated because of persistent grief.
- There will be good days and bad days, but gradually more good days than bad. It's a process.
- Grief can persist for a long time, but it will not be forever
 - *Ecc 3:4, “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance”*

- Help them to express grief to God.
 - *Ps 62:8, “Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.”*
 - *Ps 88*
- Talk to others who had similar experiences
- Avoid isolation
- Accept grief, but don't let it dictate one's life

- Be hopeful

- *1 Thess 4:13-14, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”*

- Rom 14:7-8, “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”



3. Perceived Loss of Purpose, Control, and Usefulness

Culture and technology are rapidly changing. Aging adults can experience loss of usefulness and feel “out of date.”

They also experience loss of control when they realize that they can no longer be independent

- Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist placed in a concentration camp during WWII.
- Like many, he lost many family members including his parents, brother, and wife.
- He observed that whether one fared well or not in a concentration camp is not determined by a person's physical fitness.
- He realized that those who survived the cruelty of concentration camps maintained their purpose in life. (Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning*)



■ Role Transition

- From creating → leading → teaching/ mentoring
→ supporting

■ Purpose

- Towards their family
- Towards their church
- Towards the broader community

■ Brainstorm ideas with them about things that they can look forward to

- Breakfast with grandchildren, teaching, etc.

- Move away from self-focus to other-focus
 - *2 Cor. 5:14-15, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”*

4. Guilt or Regret Over the Past

Some issues, if not resolved,
worsen over time

Unresolved guilt about past
sins, regrets about unwise
choices, and unreconciled
relationships with others can
continue to haunt an aging
believer—especially when hopes
of reconciliation diminish.

■ *Ecc. 7:13-14, “Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.”*

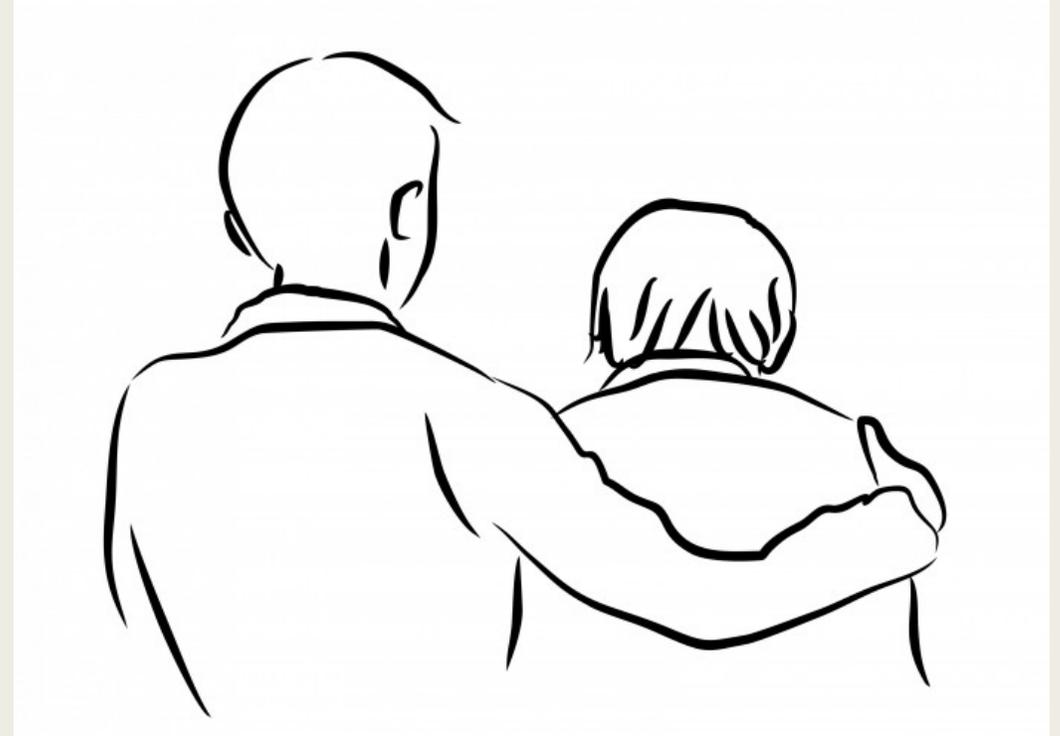
- There is no perfect life. Everyone has something that is “crooked.”
- If we are not perfect, then there will be regrets
- We cannot change the past

- Both prosperity and adversity are from God. God is in control
- We cannot control other people's behavior. We have limited control over the situation sometimes. We cannot "fix" other people. We are only responsible for our thoughts, attitude, and behavior.

- *Philippians 3:13-14, “But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*
 - Our past shapes and influences us but do not dictate our future.
 - Encourages aging adults not to dwell in the past but to focus on the goal of Christlikeness

Help for the Caregiver

- Whether you are caring for an aging adult or someone who struggles with chronic illness, being a caregiver has unique challenges.
- Remember:
 - *Everyone is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28; Ps 8:4-8)*
 - *God is also working in you through this experience (James 1:2-4). God will complete the work in us (Philippians 1:6).*



Adapted from the minibook, *Help for the Caregiver* by Mike Emlet

Be Aware of Temptation

- The person you are caring for has unique temptations, so you, as a caregiver, will be tempted in certain areas
- Three common struggles are anger, fear, and indispensability.
- Anger
 - *“God, why aren’t you doing anything?”*
 - *“I deserve better than this”*
 - *“I just want to have a normal family”*
 - *“I can’t do this anymore”*

- Fear

- *“what if things get worse....”*
- *“I see nothing but pain for the rest of our lives....”*
- *“Unless I make the right decision, I will worsen the situation.”*

- Indispensable

- *“If I don’t do it, nobody will.”*
- *“Nobody cares except for me.”*
- *“Nobody can do it better than I can.”*

Signs of Burnout

■ Social

- *Little or no time for outside relationships*
- *You and your spouse spend little time talking*
- *Unresolved tension between you and other family members*
- *You feel isolated and alone*

■ Physical

- *Poor sleep*
- *Feeling tired all the time*
- *Stopped exercising*
- *Difficulty concentrating/ making decisions*

■ Spiritual

- *Withdrawn from church life*
- *Stopped Bible reading and praying*
- *Resent the time that you spend caregiving*
- *Little or no joy in life*
- *Feel like you are just “going through the motions.”*
- *Feeling irritable*

Practical Suggestions

- Involve other people to care along side of you as much as possible
- Cultivate thankfulness
- Do not neglect your personal spiritual discipline
- If possible, involve the person you are caring for while you care
 - *Reading out loud passages from the Bible during devotion.*
 - *Listening to worship music or sermons while you are caring*
- Attend to your own health
- Maintain your community



Q AND A

GROUP SHARING:

What have you
learned from
caring for aging
parents, patients,
friends, etc.?