

## Who's Afraid of...Growing Old!

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

June 23, 2019

When you are in your 40's you joke about becoming a member of this group.

When you turn 50 this group sends you their personal invitation to become a part of the over 39 million people who identify themselves with this group.

The group is known by four letters!

Anyone have a clue what group I am talking about?

AARP! The American Association of Retired Persons.

How many of you are a member of this "old folks" group?

I have my card right here!

In my googling AARP I realized that I am older than AARP! That's old!

This U.S. based group was founded in 1958 to address the lifestyle, issues, experiences, health concerns and so much more of people 50 years plus.

The mission statement of AARP is,

*"To empower people to choose how they live as they age."*

I enjoy the benefits and discounts I get as a member. The problem I have is remembering to ask for the benefits!

I enjoy the magazine, which by the way, is the largest subscription magazine in the U.S. The articles are relevant in helping me to choose ways to help me grow older.

AARP's t.v. commercials give me hope to continue to be active and to celebrate my life, no matter how old my birth certificate tells me I am.

I have learned from many of my friends who are much older than I am and from some friends who are a lot younger than I am that one's age or number doesn't define who a person is.

Attitude defines who a person is. I have some 80+ year old friends who are living a good life. They are living each day of their lives with such a great outlook on life; living life to their fullest.

Then I know folks under 40 who are not living life to its fullest. Their attitude is living life to its poorest.

AARP's mission statement reminds us that we have a choice in how we live our lives. Do we choose to live it to the fullest or the poorest? Are we afraid of growing old or do we enter each new day with a sense of seeing what God has next for us?

What are some of the fears you and I and others have about growing old?

Many are afraid of growing old and being alone. We worry about our health. We worry about if we will have any friends who will grow old gracefully and joyfully with us. And what about the fear of growing old and becoming dependent upon our kids. Then there is the fear of having enough money when we grow old and retire. There is the fear of what will I do with all my time? There may be the fear of physical limitation that will not allow me to be able to do what I use to do. Then there is the fear of growing old and wondering how many good years do I have left?

David the psalmist echoed this fear when he prayed, "**Lord teach us to number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**" Psalm 90:12

It is a wise person who faces the limitations of this life with an open heart and mind to God. A person who recognizes how fragile life can be is a person who will enter each new day with a courageous, joyful and strong spirit for life.

This is a life centered around God being the author and giver of life. Each day is recognized and received as a gift. Life is not taken for granted.

No matter how young or old we may be, according to our birth certificate, we all have the hope of having this wisdom in growing old and not a fear of growing old. We are encouraged to build our foundation of life each new day. We have examples of folks who built this foundation in their lives and were used by God in mighty ways when they were in their 80's. Moses and Aaron were in their early 80's when God called on them to lead the people on their 40 year freedom march out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land. What a great road trip adventure! (Exodus 7:6-9) Caleb was 85 when he asked for the hill country to take on the giants of that land. He wasn't afraid to take the risks and face the major struggles in life...even at 85. (Joshua 14:1-6) When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, God told him he still had some very large areas of land to be taken. (Joshua 13:off)

Old age is not a barrier to be used by God in not using you. He still has things in life for you to experience and do.

In fact, old age is lifted up as a banner of wisdom, honor and respect. Most of us older folks have gray hair. I love the bible's promise, **"Gray hair is a crown of glory....the gray hair of experience is the splendor of the old..."** (Proverbs 16:31; 20:29)

Glory! Experience! Splendor!  
I don't mind one bit those words being used in reference to me!  
How about you?

God instructed the people to, **"rise in the presence of the aged and honor the elderly face-to-face..."** (Leviticus 19:32)

People, especially in our young-oriented culture, often find it easy to dismiss the opinions of the elderly and avoid taking time to sit down and visit with them. Young people think us older folks don't understand what they are going through. The old folks are too set in their ways. But the fact that God commanded the people to honor the elderly shows how seriously we should take the responsibility of respecting those older than us. Their wisdom from experience can save us from many pitfalls.

I remember when I was first entering the ministry as a pastor, I would ask all the old pastors and those retired, if they were me, entering into ministry, what would they do differently or what advice did they have for me.

It was almost unanimous in two areas of wisdom: Take your day off religiously AND spend as much time as you can with your family. I took their wisdom to heart and can look back on my 38 years of ministry and can see how I lived out their wisdom.

A few years ago I realized that I was now one of the old pastors. Well, more than just a few years ago! At this past Annual Conference, while I was enjoying a cold one by my son's coffee shop kiosk...a cold brew coffee...two young pastors came up to me at separate times to thank me. They both thanked me for being adamant that as young pastors they have daily devotions in God's Word and that they weekly take their sabbath, their day off. Wow! Gray hair experience was honored. I must admit I felt glory and splendor!

My point being, if you trust God in your gray hair wisdom He will use you to help others. We have much to teach to and learn from our young culture and with fellow gray-hairs! Young people, invite an old gray hair to sit and enjoy some coffee and conversation. Old gray-hairs, invite a young person to lunch or coffee and share your wisdom of experience.

Start this week! Start each new day celebrating the life of glory and splendor God gives to us. We are encouraged to make each day count instead of fearfully counting each day with these words:

***"This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice! Let us be glad in it!"*** (Psalm 118:24)

There are days when the last thing we want to do, or feel like doing, is crawling out of bed with our aches and pains and be glad about it. Our attitude is moody and dreary and whiny. Our situation(s) seems to be on a downhill slide and our sorrow or guilt seems overwhelming.

The last thing we feel like doing or being is joyful in Jesus. We are to wake up each day and take hold of it, grab hold of God with honesty and pray for that rejoicing attitude of a new day of life. Focus on God! Pray that promise!

***"This is the very day God acted---let's celebrate and be festive! Salvation now, God. Salvation now! Oh yes, God---a free and full life!"*** (Psalm 118:24 Message bible)

The Apostle Paul understood struggles in life and wrote these words of hope, even when we feel at the end of our rope in life:  
***"So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace."*** (II Corinthians 4:16)

As we grow older it is easy, at times, to lose heart and quit living life to its fullest each day. It is easy to stay inside to ourselves and have our own pity party.

Our physical bodies may seem to be falling apart but on the inside we should be seeing a daily newness in life. We have the experience to tell us we have been through struggles before. God has seen us through them and He is still with us to see us through this one.

We are challenged to not let our fatigue, pain, criticism, loneliness force us off the job of serving Jesus each new day. Our focus is to be on the daily renewing and energizing presence of His Holy Spirit. He is much better than any ensure shake or multi-vitamin pill!

The challenge as we grow old...and everyone us is heading in the same direction, is to make the choice to grow old in a way that makes God look glorious.

We grow old. We do not wake up one day and shazam! you are old.

We grow into it not in fear but in faith.

Our culture emphasizes looking young physically with face lifts and other body lifts!

Our Christ emphasizes staying young with a FAITH lift in all areas of our lives...which are not physical.

We have the choice on how we grow old! Fearful or faithful?

A life without God central and celebrated each day can produce a grumpy old person who is bitter, lonely (because no one wants hang around grumpiness) and hopeless.

*"You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing." ---unknown*

A life centered around God is faithful and filling. There is a deep inner peace and joy that gets us through the struggles of growing old. You grow old giving God the glory by serving others with Jesus' love.

*"Those who love deeply never grow old; they may die of old age but they die young."---Benjamin Franklin*

*"You are never too old to set a new goal or dream a new dream."*  
---C. S. Lewis

**"God who began a good work in you will complete it..."**

Philippians 1:6

**"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree...they will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green..."** (Psalm 92:12a,14)

Grow old in a way that brings glory to God each new day.

This is the day that God has given to you...how will you choose to grow a day older?

Fearful or Faithful?

