

Scriptural Retirement- Serving and Sharing Jesus

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Retirement can mean different things to different people. It may mean working for some, and not working for others. It may mean spending time with the grandchildren or taking trips. It may mean finally having the time to serve, or focusing on new paths and career opportunities. Or, it may mean caring for a loved one rather than getting to do something that you desire. Maybe you fall into one, or several of these categories.

Retirement has a profound effect on people's time, health, lifestyles and purposes. We know that the world may view retirement in certain ways. But how is retirement viewed through the lens of Holy Scripture? Is there even such a thing in God's Word? The only reference to a retired, slow downed life can be found in **Numbers 8:23-25**.

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. And from the age fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more.’ ”

At a certain age the Levitical Priests had to cease their service in the Tent of Meeting and the Temple. But does it mean that they were “washed up” and couldn't be used any longer? To the contrary. In verse 26 the Scripture states:

“They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no more service. Thus shall you do to the Levites in assigning their duties.”

Even though they were not allowed to conduct their priestly duties because of age, these men could still use their time and efforts to mentor the younger priests and act as guards. Yes, they were compelled to retire from one thing, but there were more opportunities ahead.

That was it. The **ONLY** mention of retirement in the Bible. So, what does this tell us? Outside of this specific scripture reference retirement isn't a biblical thing. In fact, we find several references to the contrary. As we age in the Lord God is still

keen on using us to serve, to mentor, to witness, to grow in our discipleship of Jesus Christ.

As some get older, raise their children, and leave their careers, they sometimes think that their “faith life” is also over. Some believe that they’ve spent enough time doing things in the church and worshipping. This may cause individuals to drift away, or refuse to do any more for Christ’s mission. The term for this is **“Rocking Chair Theology.”**

But this is neither scriptural or God’s purpose for our aging lives. The Lord who knew us even before we were in the womb and promises not to leave us when we get older has a definite plan for us in our later years. And that is what this bible study aims to address. Biblically, what is God calling us to do with our time, our resources, and the gifts which He has provided?

In **Proverbs 16:31** it is written:

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”

As we become older there is still that opportunity to grow in our discipleship of Jesus, make Christ known to the coming generations and witness the living Savior to others. Are we ready for the opportunity and challenge?

Scriptures to read, consider, and discuss

Isaiah 46:3-4-

- **How do you experience God being with you in your aging?**

Jeremiah 29:11-

- **What specific plans does the Lord have for your elder years?**

Job 12:12-

- **What wisdom have you gained in your life, and how can it be shared with future generations?**

Psalm 92:12-15-

- **What kind of fruit are you “bearing’ for the Kingdom of God in the later years?**

Acts 20:24-

- **How have you dedicated your life to sharing Christ and his grace?**

II Timothy 4:7-

- **How have you been able to “keep the faith” as you age?**

Below, please take the time to reflect upon your “Journey of Aging.” How have you experienced God’s presence? How are you presently serving the Lord and making Christ known to others?

“Age Is a Gift from God”

According to Holy Scripture, God has provided his people several years of living, and expects us to use that time and longevity to serve and share Jesus with our friends, relatives, associates and neighbors.

In **Genesis 5:5** it is written that Abraham lived 930 years. Noah walked the earth 950 years according to **Genesis 9:29**, and the winner of long living can be found in **Genesis 5:27** with Methuselah, as he registered with 969 years of age. But there was a definite a change in life expectancy after the flood.

In **Genesis 6:3** it is written, **“Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.’”** And **Psalm 90:10** says, **“The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.”** None of us knows how long we’re going to live. Medical concerns, accidents, aging or other incidents can affect the life span. That’s why we need to take these advanced years as a precious gift from God, and directly use this time to serve the Lord.

Please examine and discuss these following scriptural texts on how God uses older people to do extraordinary things-

- **Genesis 18:1-15-**
- **Exodus 7:1-7-**
- **Joshua 14:6-14-**
- **Luke 1:5-25-**
- **Luke 2:22-38-**
- **Titus 2:1-6-**

Please reflect and share how God is using you in these later years of your life.

“Relationships and Activity”

There are differing ways that aging is defined. In **Chronological Aging**, it's all about a person's physical age. **Functional Aging** focuses on what tasks that an individual can actually perform. And **Psychological Aging** centers on a person's attitude, will, and drive to accomplish goals. Whatever your understanding of aging is, there are some things which are certain. When a person has relationships and are active, they tend to age far better than those individuals who are void of meager connections and activity.

Loneliness, isolation and loss have become worldwide epidemics for older adults. The Prime Minister of Great Britain has even appointed a Minister of Loneliness to combat the challenge in that country. The suicide rate among mature adults is far larger than younger generations. There are certainly many causes for **L.I.L. (Loneliness, Isolation and Loss)**, the death of loved ones and friends, having to offer constant care for one who is medically challenged, loss of purpose, illness, lack of exercise, poor nutrition, or spending endless hours in your home watching the television. Our bodies were not created for sedentary, non-relational life styles. Relationships and activity are the key for healthy aging and longevity.

Please read, discuss and answer the following questions, as these scriptures focus on relationships and activity.

Genesis 27- An aging and visually impaired Isaac is manipulated by his own wife, Rebekah, and his son, Jacob, as they carry out a plan to steal the birthright blessing away from Esau. *As we get older, what kinds of relationships do we have with our spouses and children? Have you or others you know ever manipulated or tricked? How does it make us feel when our bodies and minds are affected by health concerns? Please share.*

Genesis 47:7-12- Joseph brings his father to meet the Pharaoh, as the leader of Egypt has literally saved the Hebrew nation from famine and starvation. Before offering a blessing to the absolute head, Jacob has a frank man to man talk with the Pharaoh, sharing the difficulties of life and aging. *What kinds of things do we talk to people about? Do we share disappointments and needs? What kinds of aging things do we discuss?*

Joshua 13:1-7- Even though Joshua was “old and advanced in years,” the Lord still had more work for him to do, conquering the promise land from the Canaanites. Joshua was called to be active. *What is the Lord calling us to do? How can we still be active in our aging lives?*

Joshua 23:1-13- As Joshua gets older and nears death, he has some things that he wants to relate to the leaders of Israel. No other gods, no outside marriages, and trust in the Lord alone. *What wisdom do we want to share with our families, friends, and neighbors? What would we want to tell them about the past and the future?*

Ruth 1:6-15, 4:13-16- Naomi is grieving and angry with God. Along with being forced from her home and going to a foreign country because of famine, she is having to face life following the sudden death of her husband and sons. Along with being economically vulnerable, she must now part with her daughters-in-law. More grief. But even in the midst of these horrific times, God blesses Naomi with Ruth, Boaz, and new birth. *Grieving and sadness is quite prevalent in getting older. How do we deal with the loss of loved ones? What kinds of relationships do we have with in-laws? Aging may mean less money and resources. How do stretch our finances? How have we seen the Lord bless us even during the struggles of life?*

I Samuel 8:1-9- The prophet and priest Samuel becomes visibly angry when the elders of Israel show concern about his aging and his sons’ perversions, as they demand a king to rule the nation. *How do we feel when people question our aging competence? Does getting older provide us a license to “lash out?” Is our anger better or worse as we age?*

I Kings 2:1-9- Before dying, King David has some final instructions for his son, Solomon, including vendettas and scores that need to be settled. *What are we “hanging onto” as we get older? What grudges can’t we let go? How does this “unresolved business” affect our aging and dying?*

I Kings 11:1-8- As King Solomon ages, he is being influenced by his many wives and mistresses to accept their gods. Obviously, this is having an adverse reaction

with his relationship with the Almighty God. *Who is influencing us as we get older? Is this influence positive or negative? Is this influence enhancing our lives or causing distress?*

I Kings 12:6-15- When Rehoboam is initially made the leader of the united kingdom, he asks the older men of Israel on how he should treat the people. They advise him to lighten the load, and serve them. But Rehoboam would not listen to them. So, he went to the young guys who told the king to keep hammering Israel. These actions eventually caused the kingdom to divide. *How do you feel about the younger generations? What is their respect level for the older generations? Are they receptive to be given wisdom/mentoring, or are they not interested? What should our reactions to this be?*

Titus 2:1-6- Older men and older women are given instructions on how to act, teach and train the younger generations. *How are you doing this in your advanced years? Do you freely take on this responsibility, or are you resentful about it? How do your actions impact upon others?*

I Timothy 5:1-16- Biblically, there is no question that God shows special care for the widow and the orphan. The church is specifically called upon to execute this care and justice. *So how is the church doing? Do we reach out to the widows for their care, and offer support groups for their concerns? If you are a widow, how are you being called to live and share the faith?*

The Grandparenting Relationship- There are more than 70 million grandparents in the country. They lead around 37% of all households, as many are the daily guardians to their grandchildren. The Church can offer several ministries to grandparents including; support groups, conferences, grandparenting camps, and intergenerational ministry opportunities. Grandparents today are becoming the sole source of sharing the faith. Through visits, letters, phone calls and the internet, Christ can be made known to grandchildren.

Please consider these following texts that affect our grandparenting-

-Proverbs 17:6 -Deuteronomy 6:4-9 -Job 5:25-27-Proverbs 4:1-19 -I Timothy 1:5

“Faithfully Serving”

Serving is the centerpiece of the Holy Scriptures. As believers in Jesus Christ we are called to deny self, and serve others in the Lord’s name. The Greek word for serve is **Diakonos-one who follows the command of another**. We are provided with examples of service in the Word. In **John 13:1-20**, after he washes their feet, Jesus tells the disciples to follow his example and do the same to others. **I Peter 4:10** reminds us that the Spirit has provided us gifts to serve one another. And in **Mark 10:45** we hear those powerful words of Jesus, **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”**

Older adults are sometimes blessed with time, skills, and resources to serve both in the life of the church, and in the community at large. It is true that we ourselves certainly receive a lot in giving to others.

So how does God equip us to serve? Please read and discuss the following Scriptures.

- II Timothy 3:16-17-
- Ephesians 4:11-13-
- I Corinthians 12-
- Romans 12:1-8-

How are you presently serving, and what are some ways that you want to serve in the future?

Here are a few instances of mature adults serving in the bible. Please read and discuss the following texts.

- 1. II Samuel 19:31-40- Barzillai physically served King David, and was willing to offer his own son to continue this service. (Physical Service)**
- 2. I Kings 19:21- The prophet Elijah calls and begins to mentor Elisha. (The Service of Mentoring)**
- 3. Psalm 148:12-13- The Psalmist is making known that all ages can praise the Lord. (The Service of Praise and Worship)**

“Sharing the Faith and Making Disciples”

Please read the following biblical texts and discuss-

- **Acts 1:8**
- **Matthew 28:19-20**

These words are clear. As believers in Jesus we are called to witness the Savior and share the faith. We are called to make disciples for Christ. And this even includes the aging. Through the power of the Holy Spirit older men and women are filled with God’s power to experience the Lord’s presence, and to help others grow in the faith.

Please read Joel 2:28-29- How have you experienced the power of God’s Spirit in your own life? How has it equipped you to share the faith with others?

These following Psalms specifically encourage seasoned adults to share the faith to future generations. Please read and discuss-

- **Psalm 71:8-9-**
- **Psalm 71:17-18-**
- **Psalm 143:5-**

As aging disciples of Jesus, we are being compelled to grow in our own faith through the study of God’s Word, worship and prayer. How is our spiritual life? Are you taking the time to be involved in these things? How are you growing closer to Jesus? How are you making disciples for the Lord?

“A Faithful Response”

The cultural understanding of retirement is not a biblical thing. God has other plans for older adults and it's to do ministry for Jesus Christ. As seniors, it would be so easy just to rest on our laurels, thinking that we deserve this time of fun and frolic. “I've worked hard enough, I've raised a family, I've saved money, and I've served my church.” It's now my time to “gear down” and enjoy.

Yes, if we're granted the opportunity to receive some rest and renewal we are truly blessed people. But for some because of illness, financial concerns, and having to raise grandchildren, the later years may be a totally different experience.

Whichever the case, one thing is for sure. In our aging years the Lord has plans for us, and it's to joyfully and passionately make Jesus known to the world now, and for generations to come.

Please read and discuss I Corinthians 6:19-20.

Since God fills us, and we've been literally bought with the price of Jesus blood, we're expected to glorify the Lord in our bodies and actions. So, this is the plan. The older we are, the better. It's all about believing in Jesus, worshipping Jesus, serving Jesus, and sharing Jesus. Can we leave a greater legacy? Can we experience a more fulfilling meaning and purpose for our lives?

***As we age and experience the effects of getting older, what will be our response?
Please read the following texts-***

- ***I Samuel 4:12-18-***
- ***Deuteronomy 34:1-7-***

In the end, Eli's final days were fraught with health concerns, family failures, and an unexpected, tragic death. Moses' last days were filled with promise, expectation, and as the scriptures state, “His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.

Let us live our final years abundantly, witnessing and serving Jesus Christ!