

# THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

## Honoring the Elderly

How a Biblical Worldview Impacts  
How We View Old Age

By Liz Abrams

In 2014, medical doctor Ezekiel Emanuel wrote an article expressing his hope that he would only live to 75 years of age. He reasoned that he would have lived a full life with fulfilling relationships with his children and grandchildren at 75 but would not undergo the decline of old age.<sup>1</sup>

Most cultures treat older people with respect and deference. People who have already provided years of care to their families and their wider community are seen to deserve the benefits of a comfortable retirement.

However, from a utilitarian perspective, at some point in life, elderly people become a drain on the system when they consume more resources than they provide. As much as we might love Grandma's apple pie or Granddad's war stories, why should we value people even when their physical contribution has greatly decreased?

### Old Age and the Fall

God originally designed people to live forever. If Adam had never sinned, neither

he nor his descendants would have ever experienced the decline in health and physical ability or the increase in sickness often associated with old age. The initial generations after the fall lived for hundreds of years, implying that they aged much slower than we do today.

Even though aging is a function of the fall, a believer dying "old and full of years" is seen as a blessing. Scripture says, "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). In our fallen world, death is an unavoidable reality. But, for believers, death allows us to enter the presence of the Lord to await the resurrection of the dead, and we have been promised resurrection lives in perfect bodies that will never age and die.

### Caring for Those Who Cared for Us

Each of us went through a stage of infancy and childhood where we depended completely on our parents. We were not contributing anything; in fact, we added a lot of burden, stress, and sleepless nights! Just as parents care for helpless infants, we should, in turn, care for the elderly when they are no longer as independently capable as they once were.

Both infancy and old age remind us of our dependence on others. Just as an elderly relative depends on us, we will one day likely depend on younger people to help when we are no longer able. In this way, caring for the elderly is obeying the golden rule.

### **Learning Wisdom from the Elderly**

One of my favorite parts of visiting nursing homes for ministry is sitting with elderly people and listening to their stories and life advice. Whether they went through military service, raised large families, or had interesting careers, they often have a wealth of experience and wisdom to share.

It is an invaluable experience to spend time with believers who have walked with Christ for many decades, being shaped and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

### **Service for the Kingdom in Old Age**

While 65 is considered the standard retirement age, older Christians have an invaluable role in the body of Christ. Many pastors continue serving well into their golden years, and older Christians serve as examples and role models for younger Christians.

### **The Example of a Good Death**

In our culture, we tend to avoid thinking or talking about death as long as possible, and we keep it out of our minds until it is unavoidable. However, as Christians, we should not fear death because we go directly into the presence of Christ to wait for the resurrection of the dead. While it is not the final resurrected state, that state is free

from sin and suffering, so the Apostle Paul could speak of it as being “better by far.”

Older Christians have invariably experienced the death of friends and loved ones and are more likely to contemplate their own death. In today’s society, assisted suicide, sometimes referred to with the euphemism “death with dignity,” is increasingly promoted. While proponents argue that people with inevitably deadly and painful diseases should be able to end their lives before suffering the debilitating effects of their illnesses, assisted suicide, once legalized, often becomes used for non-deadly and even mental illnesses. In some places, it is seen as a good solution for a depressed person to take their own life via assisted suicide.

People facing terminal illnesses already have a humane, life-honoring option—hospice. In hospice, people can be offered pain relief and other measures to help them be as comfortable as possible and live their last days to the fullest.

Everyone should care about how society views elderly people because if we live long enough, we will eventually become them! Christians should model care for our elders and elderly Christians should be involved in the lives of their younger family members and church congregations.

#### Footnote

1 - Ezekiel Emanuel, “Why I Hope to Die at 75,” *The Atlantic*, October 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/10/why-i-hope-to-die-at-75/379329/>

Originally published at: [answersingenesis.org/family/honoring-elderly/](http://answersingenesis.org/family/honoring-elderly/)

## Rachel Steiner's Salvation Testimony

I had the immense privilege of growing up in a Christian home and attending church as a child. But just because those things were true of my life, that didn't make me a child of God. I entered this world with a sinful, hard heart. I believed that I knew better than God and did what I wanted to do. I lived my life how I thought best, in rebellion against the holy God. I had a deceived heart. I thought I knew what was best. I also had a doubting heart. I doubted that God's ways were better than mine, which led to my disobedience towards God. That disobedience showed up in ways like lying, disobeying my parents, and worshiping other things other than the one true God.

During that time, I was as Ephesians 2:1-3 says, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

I was unable to see my need for God until His Spirit and His Word began working in my life and helping me to see that my sin of disobedience and rebellion towards God was separating me from God. The punishment for that was death as Romans 6:23 says: "For the wages of sin is death but

the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I understood that God is the One who created me, and as such, He is the One who knows what is best for me. Therefore, instead of living my life how I wanted to, I needed to submit to Him and surrender my life and follow His ways instead of my own. I needed to turn from my sinful, rebellious ways and receive the free gift of forgiveness that Jesus made possible for me. My sins required death, as all sin does. Jesus died in our place for all of our sins. He helped me to see that I needed His forgiveness.

Turning to Jesus and receiving the gift of salvation is something we all need to do. We are all sinners, living in rebellion against God. We need to turn from our rebellion and submit to God and His ways and do as Romans 10:9-10 says: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." I'm so very grateful for the gift of forgiveness that Jesus has given to me, and so thankful for His sacrifice in order that I can have a relationship with Him.

~ *Titus 3:4-7* ~

*But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

# FUNNIES

People are funny! We all want to live long lives, but no one wants to get old!

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Tell a man there are 300 billion stars in the sky. He'll believe you. Tell the same man a park bench has just been painted. He will have to touch it to be sure.

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Once two hunters got lost in the woods. "We must be calm," said the first.

The second hunter nodded. "I have an idea," he said. "I read about this once. If you get lost, you should shoot three times into the air. Then someone will come and save you."

So they did this, but nothing happened. They did it again. Still no help came. They did it a few more times. Still nothing.

The first hunter was upset. "What are we going to do now?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the other hunter. "We're almost out of arrows."

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A teacher was trying to get her students to learn new words. "Repeat new word eight or ten times," she said. "Then it will be yours for the rest of your life."

In the back row, Sally closed her eyes and spoke softly, "Steve, Steve, Steve..."

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Dad: This is an awful report card. There is nothing good about it.

Son: Sure there is. At least you know I haven't been cheating.

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A man from Texas was on a tour of New York State. At each stop he boasted about how things were bigger and better in Texas.

Then they came to Niagara Falls. The guide proudly said, "I bet you don't have anything like this in Texas."

The Texan looked at the rushing water. "Nope," he said, "I reckon we don't. But we have plumbers who could fix it."

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Harvey was seated on a train behind two young people. He heard the young man saying sweet things to his girlfriend. "Darling," the young man said, "when I gaze into your eyes, time ceases."

It sounded very sweet. So Harvey thought he'd try the same thing on his girlfriend. That night at one special moment, he put his arm around her. Then he whispered, "Darling, when I see your face..." He tried to think of what the young man had said. "Darling, your face..." he couldn't remember it. He thought some more. At last it came to him, "Darling, your face could stop a clock!"

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John looked for a job at a food store. The manager took one look at him and said, "Yes. I'll give you a job. Sweep out the store."

"But I went to college," John said.

"That's alright," said the boss. "I'll show you how."