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# THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

## Senior Saints, We Need You

### Why the Church Needs Seniors

By: Douglas A. Sweeney

When I was growing up in the 1970s, my grandfather founded a ministry to seniors in and around Portland, Oregon. He'd recently retired from many years of pastoral leadership and sought to stay active in ministry to others. Noticing a big need in their community for service to the elderly, he and my grandmother stepped up to serve with a few good friends.

Their Nursing Home Ministries offered preaching, worship services, and pastoral care to several thousand men and women (in a couple of dozen homes) in the golden years of life. When I visited my grandparents, they took me on their rounds to see people in these homes. The seniors we visited were always glad to see a little boy. Nearly 50 years later, I retain vivid memories of these people and the edifying times we shared together.

My parents now live in a retirement facility that's run by Christians and offers chaplaincy services. But so many senior citizens go without any serious discipleship

ministry. Too few churches or pastors offer ministry to seniors that exceeds what happens in age-based small groups and infrequent home visits.

### Enduring Usefulness

Seniors often think they're too old to be useful outside their families. When it comes to church work, they often withdraw to "give the young people a chance," as some of them insist. They don't like to drive at night, if at all—and they're hesitant to ask younger friends for a ride. Sometimes it's because they don't have younger friends. They don't want to be a burden, and perhaps the young people they do know haven't shown much interest in their lives.

Many older mainline churches reserve resources for ministry to seniors. Many younger evangelical congregations, though, pursue growth by designing church cultures that are youthful, casual, fast-paced, and high-tech—inadvertently leaving seniors feeling ignored or, at best, in the way.

It should come as no surprise, then, that many older adults are declining in discipleship. In the very season of life when they should focus more than ever on preparing to be with God, they're stagnating spiritually, sometimes even departing from the faith.

Few pollsters have quantified this. But in the summer of 2011, Barna ran a survey of “religious changes” among “busters, boomers, and elders.” They discovered that church attendance had plummeted among those now in their seniority. Engagement in churches and involvement in regular discipleship practices among those surveyed had fared even worse. Anyone involved in church leadership today knows these numbers have not likely improved in recent years.

There are now more than 54 million senior citizens (age 65 and older) living in the United States. They make up 16 percent of the general population, and this is expected to grow to nearly 22 percent by 2040.

### **Fighting to the Finish, Together**

It’s time to step up our efforts at ministering to (and with) these older brothers and sisters. They have so much to contribute to the church. “Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days” (Job 12:12). But they need help discerning how best to mature in faith and practice as their bodies decline. They need encouragement to finish their race with endurance, resilience, and joy.

Our seniors need to know that our churches still want them, that our people still believe that “gray hair is a crown of glory . . . gained in a righteous life” (Prov. 16:31). Seniors need to be persuaded that we want them to teach us “what accords with sound doctrine,” that we need our older men to show us how to be “sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness,” that we need our older women to be “reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine [and] to teach what is good” (Titus 2:1–3). I wonder, though, whether the average church member today thinks much about these things. Perhaps they need pastors to

remind them what the Scriptures say about our life together.

My hope is that our seniors will dare to cry out, “So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come” (Ps. 71:18). And I hope that countless younger members will show themselves eager to receive such instruction.

All of us should live like we trust that the righteous “still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the LORD is upright” (Ps. 92:14–15). All of us should do what we can to keep seniors from feeling insignificant. “Though our outer self is wasting away,” we might well remind them, “our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16–17).

The whole body of Christ needs our seniors to pray for us, advise us, and support us. But this won’t happen well, at least not with regularity, unless pastors and members intentionally reach out and challenge them to grow—even in their old age.

Dear seniors, please show us how to live in light of eternity. Show us how to wean our affections from the world. Show us how to prepare for life in heaven and the new Jerusalem. We need you!

Taken from: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/senior-saints-we-need-you/>

## **Let 'Em Know or Let It Go?**

By: John MacArthur

How do we know when to confront and when to quietly forgive and forget? That's a good question because most people seem to err on one side or the other. Some people think it is best to overlook every offense and take pride in their tolerance. However, Paul

confronted the Corinthians for tolerating sin in the church and rebuked them for failing to deal with a man living in sin (1 Corinthians 5).

On the other side of the issue are people who confront over any slight infraction and make themselves intolerable.

Are there any biblical principles to help us make the right choice? Yes! Here are six guidelines to help you know whether to quietly forgive or to lovingly confront.

1. Whenever possible, especially if the offense is petty or unintentional, it is best to forgive unilaterally. This is the very essence of a gracious spirit. It is the Christlike attitude called for in Ephesians 4:1-3. We are called to maintain a gracious tolerance ("forbearance") of others' faults. Believers should have a sort of mutual immunity to petty offenses. Love "is not easily angered" (1 Corinthians 13:5). If every fault required formal confrontation, the whole of our church life would be spent confronting and resolving conflicts over petty annoyances. So for the sake of peace, to preserve the unity of the Spirit, we are to show tolerance whenever possible (see Mathew 5:39-40; 1 Peter 2:21-25).
2. If you are the only injured party, even if the offense was public and flagrant, you may choose to forgive unilaterally. Examples of this abound in Scripture. Joseph (Genesis 37-50), David (2 Samuel 16:5-8), and Stephen (Acts 7:60) each demonstrated the unilateral forgiveness of Christ (Luke 23:34).
3. If you observe a serious offense that is a sin against someone other than you, confront the offender. Justice never permits a Christian to cover a sin against someone else. While we are entitled, and even encouraged, to overlook wrongs committed against us, Scripture everywhere forbids us to overlook

wrongs committed against another (see Exodus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:20; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 59:15-16; Jeremiah 22:3; Lamentations 3:35-36).

4. When ignoring an offense might hurt the offender, confront the guilty party. Sometimes choosing to overlook an offense might actually injure the offender (by allowing him to continue unwarned down a wrong path). In such cases it is our duty to confront in love (Galatians 6:1-2).
5. When a sin is scandalous or otherwise potentially damaging to the body of Christ, the guilty party should be confronted. Some sins have the potential to defile many people, and Scripture gives ample warning of such dangers (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Hebrews 3:13; 12:15). In fact, Scripture calls for the church to discipline individuals who refuse to repent of open sin in the body, so that the purity of the body might be preserved (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5).
6. Lastly, any time an offense results in a broken relationship, confrontation of the sinner should occur. Any offense that causes a breach in relationships simply cannot be overlooked. Both the offense and the breach must be confronted, and reconciliation must be sought. And both the offended party and the offender have a responsibility to seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 17:3). There is never any excuse for a Christian on either side of a broken relationship to refuse to pursue reconciliation.

The only instance where such a conflict should remain unresolved is if all the steps of discipline in Matthew 18 have been exhausted and the guilty party still refuses to repent.

# FUNNIES

A poultry farmer was experimenting to breed turkeys with more legs for greater profits. Finally, he succeeded.

While narrating the results to his friends, he told them “the turkey I bred had six legs!” His friends, who had got quite excited, eagerly asked, “What about the taste?”

The farmer said with a long-drawn face, “I have no idea. Can’t catch it.”

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Two opposing country chairmen were sharing a rare moment together. The Democratic chairman said, “I never pass up a chance to promote the party. For example, whenever I take a cab, I give the driver a sizable tip and say, ‘Vote Democrat.’”

His opponent said, “I have a better scheme, and it doesn’t cost me a nickel. I don’t give any tip at all. And when I leave, I also say, ‘Vote Democrat.’”

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The story is told of two ducks and a frog who lived happily together in a farm pond. The best of friends, the three would amuse themselves and play together in their waterhole.

When the hot summer days came, however, the pond began to dry up, and soon it was evident they would have to move. This was no problem for the ducks, who could easily fly to another pond. But the frog was stuck. So it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck that the frog could hang onto with his mouth as they

flew to another pond.

The plan worked well—so well, in fact, that as they were flying along a farmer looked up in admiration and mused, “Well, isn’t that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?”

The frog said, “I did.....”

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One Sunday morning at a small southern church, the new pastor called on one of his older deacons to lead in the opening prayer.

The deacon stood up, bowed his head and said, “Lord, I hate buttermilk.”

The pastor opened one eye and wondered where this was going. The deacon continued, “Lord, I hate lard.”

Now the pastor was totally perplexed. The deacon continued, “Lord I ain’t too crazy about plain flour. But after you mix ‘em all together and bake ‘em in a hot oven, I just love biscuits.”

He paused, “Lord help us to realize when life gets hard, when things come up that we don’t like, whenever we don’t understand what You are doing, that we need to wait and see what you are making. After you get through mixing and baking, it’ll probably be something even better than biscuits.” Amen.

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The middle-aged man was shuffling along, bent over at the waist as his wife helped him into the doctor’s waiting room. A woman in the office viewed the scene with sympathy. “Arthritis with complications?” she asked. The wife shook her head. “Do-it-yourself,” she explained, “with concrete blocks.”