

Forum on Aging: Providing (and Receiving) Care Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

I. On Aging

A. Voices of wisdom:

"To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living." – Henri Amiel, 1874

"We exercise a willful blindness; refusal to look at obvious in our culture to real meaning of aging. In our culture medicine has taken over the topic. Aging and dying have become *medical* events as opposed to the *meaning* events that they are."
– David Powlison

"Live each day as if thy last" – Thomas Ken. *Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun*, 1674

"Teach me in health to think of sickness,
In the brightest hours to be ready for darkness;
In life prepare me for death." – *The Valley of Vision* ("God and Myself")

B. The Word of God:

*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. ...
So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom....
Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* – Psalm 90: 9-10, 12, 14

*For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
forsake me not when my strength is spent.
But I will hope continually
and will praise you yet more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all the day,
for their number is past my knowledge.
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.* – Psalm 71:5, 9, 14-18

*The righteous flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They still bear fruit in old age;
they are ever full of sap and green,* – Psalm 92:12, 14

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus – Heb. 12:1-2

II. Positive GAINS that aging brings (Powlison)

- A. No guarantee but wisdom is meant to come with age. Pro. 16:3.
- B. Vulnerability to youthful lusts is somewhat diminished
 - Illusions of immortality
 - Illusions that you can accomplish all you set your mind to
 - Viewing pleasure as greatest good
- C. Aging calls you out on remaining sins
 - Grumpy old man syndrome; complainer, grouch
 - Coasting, indifference, stop caring
 - Fears can proliferate
 - Pride
- D. More settled depth and breadth of faith. 1 John 2:12-14
- E. Come to terms with mortality
- F. Realize ceiling; realism; no need for heroic chemo treatment
- G. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Romans 13:11

III. Felt LOSSES have always accompanied aging. (Powlison)

- A. Senses dim
- B. Sense of being set aside
- C. Apparent usefulness fades; need help vs giving help
- D. Outlive friends
- E. Loss of baseline healthiness

The church has a great opportunity now. Loneliness is a real issue. This is the most isolated generation in the history of the human race. People move, divorce, life-long singleness (% increase) chosen childlessness, one-child families (sometimes estranged), virtual "friends."

IV. Providing the care parents need

A. Guiding Principles

1. Foresight
2. Intentionality
3. Dialogue
4. Sacrifice
5. Capacity: (a) stage of life (b) circumstances (c) margin
6. Dignity: (a) Image of God (b) uniqueness of individual (c) form of glory (d) purpose
7. Community

B. Categories of Care

1. *Physical*: Car keys – Vanderbilt's Bill Wilkerson Center, occupation therapy driving program, driver rehab; Home safety; security camera
2. *Medical*: Doctor appointments, accompany to get accurate info; access to medical records; Rx auto refills; alert bracelet or pendant; personal hygiene; learn warning signs and stages of progression

3. *Financial*: revocable living trust; draft checking account to avoid missing payments; banking; Income taxes; VA benefits; Long-term care policy; lock box access; insurance policies; investments
4. *Social*: activities, neighbors informed, key routines, church, etc.
5. *Communication*: phone calls, solicitations
6. *Planning*: Anticipate wide range of situations; continually assess plans
7. *Living options*: Independent to semi-dependent; Assisted living; Palliative care; hospice care. How will we know when the time has come for a facility?
8. *Memories*: Record stories, names in photos;
9. *Team*: caregivers; agencies
10. *Self*: 1) Finish without regret: What will you regret if you never do with them? What will you regret if you never tell them? 2) Take care of yourself; consider respite care programs

V. Receiving the care you give (Powlison)

- A. *Practice weakness*; practice needing help. Truth, wisdom knows that we are weak and practices it throughout life. Asking for and receiving help from God, from each other; drive, hold elbow. As Christians we are the most realistic about this. Asking for help is a form of courage. Be unafraid to let others help.
- B. *Think through last will and testament*. This can be an expression about what you most desire and that to which you bear witness. Estate planning is not just for the wealthy. Write letters to family and friends. Speak as the dying into the lives of the living. Plan your funeral.
- C. *Take the initiative with your children*. Advance directive, financial documents, POA
- D. *Make it your ambition to “die well.”* Learning to die well has to do with the state of your soul as a shepherded person through the entire journey.

RESOURCES – a beginning

Packer, J.I. *Finishing Our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for Engaging with our Aging*
 Stevens, R. Paul. *Aging Matters: Finding Your Calling for the Rest of Your Life*
 Mace and Rabins. *The 36-hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People with Alzheimer Disease and Other Dementia and Memory Loss*
 Houston and Parker. *A Vision for the Aging Church: Renewing Ministry for and by Seniors*
 Frame, John. *Medical Ethics; Principles, Persons and Problems*
 “Aging,” Dave Powlison, CCEF Conference: Loss: Finding Hope That Lasts When Life Falls Apart

Websites: Tennessee Aging and Disability Resource Center www.tnaaad.org
 Veterans Affairs <https://www.va.gov>
 Funeral Consumers Alliance www.funerals.org
 MNA Second Career <https://pcamna.org/second-career/>