

Growing Old In The Home

Introduction. Some people get old. Others grow old. While some grow more saintly in many wonderful virtues, others grow sour near the end of their earthly existence. Those who grow in these wonderful virtues are blessed with beautiful sunset years (Psalm 92:12-15).

There is something particularly majestic about the way the Bible unfolds the life of Abraham and Sarah. We do not know their age when they married, but we can follow Abraham's life for about 105 years and Sarah's for a little less than 70 years. From the time Abraham received the call to leave Ur of the Chaldees for Canaan, down to the times of their decease, we witness their graceful aging.

Their love for God and each other deepened. Their faith continued to mature and ripen. The Bible indicates that both died in the embrace of faith (Hebrews 11:13). Abraham lived to see Isaac married to Rebekah and the birth of Esau and Jacob. Abraham and Sarah lived in pagan times where a lot of evil surrounded them. However, they made a success of their marriage and their lives. We all want to do the same, and this is what we will learn to do in this lesson.

I. Growing Old In Faith

- A. Paul closes 1 Corinthians 13 with one of the most beautiful of all tributes to three essential graces of the human soul (v. 13). All three of these graces need to abide in the homes of those who wish to please the Lord and exist with Him eternally. Every couple must grow in each of these as the marriage days stretch into months, years, and decades.
- B. There should be a deepening of a person's faith in God, the Bible, and the church because faith can overcome all obstacles that appear in a person's path.
 1. Abraham, Isaac, and David died at a good old age (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 1 Chronicles 29:28). They were not perfect men but towered far above the average. All their lives they loved God and sought to do His will (cp. Deuteronomy 6:5).
 2. Both Zacharias and Elizabeth grew old together in the Lord (Luke 1:5-7). How fortunate it is when God-fearing couples can grow old in the Lord because that gives real meaning to their last days on earth.
 3. Anna makes a brief appearance in the Bible and then forever fades. But she left her portrait as one loyal to God in old age and as one who was extremely grateful for the coming of the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38).
- C. Marriage should also see a deepening of faith in each other (Proverbs 5:18). True faithfulness toward the marital vows means that the confidence placed in each other becomes an expression of greater and more lasting beauty. There will not be the least suspicion that either will ever betray the sacred trust of the other. This will help couples make it through the "mid-life crisis" stage at 25-30 years of marriage where "trophy wives" are shamefully pursued.

II. Growing Old In Hope

- A. The second of these abiding graces is hope. Many majestic utterances are given within the scriptures about this wonderful virtue. Salvation is by hope (Romans

8:24). It is connected with real love (1 Corinthians 13:7). Hope constitutes one of the seven unities in Ephesians 4:4-6. Hope is expectation, desire, and anticipation. It looks toward eternal life and will ultimately find its full fruition in heaven (Titus 1:1-2).

- B. Marriage can be compared to a building. The building is composed of the foundation of faith, the walls of hope, and the roof of love. Long years of a happy and harmonious marriage should greatly strengthen the foundational element of faith. Just as the walls connect the foundation with the roof, so hope connects faith and love. The great promises of living in heaven will become grander and more glorious as the end approaches (Colossians 1:23)

III. Growing Old In Love

- A. Love is the greatest, grandest, and most glorious of all emotions. It has no close competitor. Love relates us to deity in both attitude and actions, and motives and mission because we know that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). The human heart never fully exhausts its ability to increase in love.
 - 1. The young man and woman who stand at the altar to pledge undying affection and loyalty to one another may feel they care for each other as deeply as they ever will.
 - 2. But if they are the right kind of people and walk with God, they will love each other far more deeply when they face the last years of life together than during the beginning of their marriage (Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:12-14).
 - 3. Love must also continue to flourish to the children and grandchildren. They are rich blessings in this life, and need to be cultivated.
- B. When love is tried it becomes stronger. Joys and sorrows can be faced together. After the children are grown and gone, if the bond of love has been cultivated, the richest part of their marriage can be before a couple (Galatians 5:6, 22).
- C. Love will also not close its eyes to the talents of younger successors. Love will not blind them to worthy young people who are arising to take their places in leadership roles. Love will tolerate no envy toward those who are younger in years and more active in work (Galatians 5:26; 1 Peter 2:1). It takes a mature and increasing love to allow for all of this to become a reality.

IV. Growing Old In Patience

- A. Patience is the ability to bear up under stress and strain. It is one of the virtues that must be supplied to the foundation of faith (2 Peter 1:5-7). Patience does not produce faith but is a fruit of faith that has been tried and tested (James 1:2-3). Patience is needed to do God's will and ultimately receive the heavenly reward (Hebrews 10:36).
- B. Patience is a virtue frequently unseen in youth (Titus 2:2). Young people are usually very impatient. They want something accomplished yesterday instead of working for its accomplishment in the future (James 5:7-8, 10-11).
- C. As couples and individuals grow older there should be a greater exhibition of patience toward each other. It is encouraging to visit the home of an elderly couple and see the fruits of patience, longsuffering, and understanding. It makes

for happier years and happier churches. No one wants to see impatient, bitter, and crabby older people.

V. Growing Old In Wisdom

- A. Youth is known for its enthusiasm, energy, idealism, and dreams; but wisdom comes with age. People of true wisdom have usually lived for many years, have profited from life's lessons, have drunk deeply from the fountain of knowledge, and have spent much time studying the scriptures (Proverbs 2:6; Ecclesiastes 2:26), and communing with the Father in prayerful requests for wisdom (Job 12:12; James 1:5).
- B. Knowledge is the acquaintance with facts, and wisdom is the ability to use what we know. Couples who have made a success out of their marriages should be able to give advice to those considering marriage. Young couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage need to seek help from a wise, godly couple.
- C. When couples seek guidance from older couples with marital or parenting issues, there is much less likelihood of being given false and harmful counsel that might come from parenting books or a marriage counselor who either does not know the Bible or does not care what it says (Proverbs 3:1-2, 13).

VI. Growing Old In Service

- A. The home in which Jesus is the guiding force will be an institution of service. The husband will serve the wife and vice versa. It is so touching to see the care one gives the other in the final times of life. There must also be a mutual exchange of service in the parent-child relationship. This home will experience the ring of friendliness and the echoes of hospitality sounding in the ears of its many grateful guests (Proverbs 17:17; 1 Timothy 5:10).
- B. The older should teach the younger to know God's word, respect His will, and adhere closely to sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Those who have been faithful Christians a long time and are growing old gracefully can do a lot to insure a safe transfer of truth from the older generation (2 Timothy 2:2).

VII. Growing Old In Contentment

- A. Paul linked godliness with contentment and said that it was "great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6-8; cp. Proverbs 15:16). Paul was a recipient of many miraculous gifts; however, contentment was not conferred on him miraculously — he had to work for it (Philippians 4:11-12; cp. 2 Kings 4:12-13).
- B. Aged people who have never mastered contentment will make themselves and everyone around them miserable. Years of living together should have mellowed their spirits and sobered their thinking (Hebrews 13:15). By the time old age is attained people should have thoroughly curbed their greed and recognized that heaven is the only possession of value (Hebrews 11:16)
- C. By the time one is old, the restlessness of youth should have been long replaced with a calm contentment to accept everything as if it cannot be changed, and to work patiently to change everything that needs to be changed.

Conclusion. Billy Graham said, “All my life, I’ve been taught to die, but no one taught me how to grow old.” The godly home is the real secret of growing old in the Lord. When older couples and individuals lift up Christ and the Bible, Christ and the Bible will allow them to grow old gracefully. So many fail with this advice and they enter old age alone, like the last leaf of autumn lingering behind.