

“They Shall Still Bring Forth Fruit In Old Age”

Introduction. A goal for many people in life is a happy retirement. We spend years saving and planning for the time in which we retire. We look forward to free time to do what interests us. But is the concept of retirement applicable to the kingdom of God? We can retire from secular jobs, what about our service in the church?

In Psalm 92:12, the righteous are likened to palm and cedar trees. Verse 14 says, “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.” We will look at how older people in the Bible carried out God’s purposes, and we will also point out the kind of older Christians God can use in His church today.

I. ***God’s Use Of Older People***

A. Moses and Aaron.

1. They were chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage at the ages of 80 and 83, respectively (Exodus 7:7).
2. What is really interesting is that this was done when they were already past the normal life span, which was revealed to us by Moses (Psalm 90:10).

B. Joshua and Caleb.

1. Joshua was given the charge of leading the conquest of Canaan during the last 30 years of his life (cf. Joshua 24:29).
2. Caleb was also involved in the conquest, and he was 85 (Joshua 14:6-11).

C. Daniel.

1. He served God for over 70 years (Daniel 1:21).
2. He was well over 80 when he experienced some of the most important parts in his service to God.
 - a) Served as one of three governors over the kingdom of Babylon (Daniel 6:1-3).
 - b) Was thrown into the lions’ den (Daniel 6:4-27).
 - c) Prospered in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus (Daniel 6:28).
 - d) Received a series of visions (Daniel 8-12).

D. Zacharias and Elizabeth.

1. The parents of John the Baptist and were “both well stricken in years” (Luke 1:7).
2. Yet he was serving in the temple, and she gave birth to John!

E. Simeon and Anna.

1. These were two elderly people who bore witness to Christ when He was presented in the temple at His circumcision (Luke 2:25-38).
2. Anna herself was at least 84, and had been serving God “with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37).

F. Paul.

1. In Philemon 9, Paul refers to himself as "aged."
2. Yet at this time in his life, he was very busy in the work of the Lord.
 - a) He wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon while in prison.
 - b) He traveled, visited, and encouraged churches after he was released from prison.

II. ***The Kind Of Older People God Can Use***

A. Those willing to serve as elders.

1. God designed the local church to be overseen by elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9).
 - a) They are older men, capable of teaching and leading the flock.
 - b) They are overseers and examples of God's flock (1 Peter 5:1-4).
2. Yet many male members seem to retire from active service in the church about the same time they retire from secular work.
 - a) Age 65 is rather young compared to the previous examples. Ironically, just when they might be useful to the Lord, they want to retire.
 - b) If you are unqualified to serve, why not spend a few years growing and developing the necessary qualifications (if possible), and then serve?

B. Those willing to be "teachers of good things."

1. Younger women need to be taught how to love their husbands, love their children, be good wives and homemakers (Titus 2:3-5).
2. Many women stop teaching when they reach the age where their wisdom and experience are most needed, and when they can be the most impressionable.
 - a) If you are not qualified to teach, then prepare yourself.
 - b) Commit yourself to study and learning the word, and in a short time you will be more than prepared!

C. Those willing to serve others.

1. There are a number of good examples.
 - a) Hospitality and benevolence -- many older Christians are financially able to do what many younger families cannot.
 - b) Edification and evangelism -- many older Christians have more available time with which to study with others.
2. Even those who are physically disabled can accomplish a lot in a congregation.
 - a) They can send cards, letters, and make phone calls.
 - b) They can spend time in prayer for the sick and for those involved in evangelism and fasting (1 Timothy 5:5).

3. The Bible further tells us what else older Christians can and should do.
 - a) Declare the that the Lord is upright (Psalm 92:15).
 - b) Proclaim God's strength to the next generation (Psalm 71:17-18).
 - c) Recount God's mighty works to the next generation (Psalm 78:1-4).

Conclusion. God can certainly use people of all ages who are willing to prepare themselves to be of service to Him and who are willing to present themselves in sacrifice to Him. We may retire from secular jobs, but your Lord still needs you! Certainly physical problems may limit what we can do, but only death can stop us from doing what we can.

The outward aging process slows everyone down, but we can be renewed inwardly day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). Our youth-oriented culture does not respect the wisdom and experience of the elderly, and they want to put the elderly "out to pasture" too quickly. Other cultures thankfully revere their elderly, appreciate their wisdom and experience, and encourage them to continue in roles of influence and leadership, even to death.