

**DID A GOOD GOD
MAKE OLD AGE?**

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PREFACE

This book has taken shape in the forge of life. Having grown up in a family in which the majority of my relatives were fifty years of age by my tenth birthday gave me an early introduction to gerontology. The intensity of my experience was multiplied when my parents became part of my household and my father developed Alzheimer's disease.

After my parents' death, I was afforded the opportunity to enroll at the University of Georgia to pursue graduate work in gerontology. This academic exposer coupled with previous theological studies enabled me to develop a structured understanding of my own life experience. This book is the first formal result of the casting I have experienced.

It is my prayer that many will profit from what the Lord has taught me both in the institution of life and the institutions of academia.

Dedication

This book cannot be dedicated to any one person. In fact, some who deserve credit I do not know. There were many who assisted in making my year of study at the University of Georgia possible. My encouragers while dealing with my father's situation and completing the academic studies were legion. But my good friends and colleagues, Rev. Cecil Brooks and Rev. Charles Dunahoo, have been the facilitators who have enabled me to achieve the goal of bringing to print this project. I am grateful to our God for the role they have played in this process.

A Word to the Reader

This book was written with a dual purpose. You may pick it off the shelf, read it, and find it a complete unit.

You may also use it as a Sunday School quarterly, or in any other group study. At the end of each chapter will be found teaching aids. The numbers in parenthesis in the text refer to appropriate aids in the Teaching Aids section at the end of each lesson. This number in the text means you will find a teaching aid for the particular subject being discussed when the number appears in the text.

Chapter 1

DID A GOOD GOD MAKE OLD AGE?

Biblical Insights on Aging

Lesson Objectives:

1. To surface theological questions students need to know how to answer.
2. To help students understand the relationship between sin and aging.
3. To help the student appreciate the significance of eternal life in terms of aging.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Raising the Theological Questions: Susan Mayhill.
- II. The Origin of Old Age.
- III. The Overcoming of Old Age.

Scripture Reading:

Genesis 5-11 (1)

“Let me tell you about my favorite school teacher,” Tom said at dinner with several colleagues at a conference on aging. (2)

“Susan Mayhill, Miss Susan as all us kids called her while growing up, never moved after her fiance was killed in World War II. She taught seventh grade English when I thought being a seventh grader was grown up. Years later when my son reached the seventh grade, Miss Susan faithfully continued to press the round pegs of the parts of speech into the square heads of seventh grade boys. When teacher conference time arrived I was horrified at the devastating effects which ‘father time’ and crippling arthritis had inflicted on this once attractive, vibrant lady. In spite of her physical condition, I was overwhelmed by her sweet enthusiastic spirit, her mental agility and her genuine concern for her students. As I left school I passed the school principal in the hall and asked if Miss Susan had not reached retirement.

“‘Oh, yes,’ replied Mr. Smith, ‘but she chooses to teach for personal and economic reasons. Since she is still the best English teacher I have, I extend her retirement grace period on a yearly basis. But next year at age seventy-two, I will not be able to do so.’

“Well, that was seven years ago. After her retirement my son and I decided to visit her regularly. We had learned that she had no living family and had exhausted her savings and home equity caring for two older sisters. We have watched this faithful servant of children languish in a nursing home. The arthritis has humped her over, enlarged her knuckles and knees and limited her to a bed and a wheel chair.

“Often my son and I visited her after church on Sundays. We had both left our visits disturbed. Only recently did my son voice the question which

had agitated our souls: 'Can God be good and be the God of old age?'"

Tom went on to speak about the spiritual struggle which he and his son encountered as a result of their love for the suffering Miss Susan.

This question had shocked Tom when his son articulated it. He and his family had been Christians for years. That God was good was unquestionable. They had often rejoiced in the goodness of God—especially on their annual family vacations in the Colorado mountains. But now the accumulation of observed pain and the personal anguish of knowing the condition of their aged friend had triggered the expression of this forbidden question.

As Tom and his son drove home that day they talked about the appropriateness of their question. Their inquiry led them in two directions. They affirmed the nature of God and quoted in unison the Confession,

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

The second component of their conversation consisted of three questions about Miss Susan and her life.

1. What kind of person is Miss Susan?
2. What have these characteristics contributed to Miss Susan's life?
3. Has Miss Susan's economic plight been a blessing or a curse to her?

Their first question yielded a gold mine of Christian character traits—dedicated, serving, giving, concerned, enduring, and patient. She had truly been a saint. They decided that these character traits had brought her joy, satisfaction and courage to face her pain; and, also that these traits had been the product of her close walk with the Lord.

As Tom told this story it became evident that he and his son had concluded that Miss Susan's economic circumstances had been a blessing to her and others. Since she had to continue to work, she had remained occupied with others and not herself. Her personal satisfaction in serving endured. And many students had profited from her unique ability to communicate. Even her years in the nursing home had afforded blessings to others, who like themselves, came away from visiting Miss Susan having received more than they had given.

"Her sweet spirit and joyful attitude," observed Tom, "made you forget her pain racked body until you left her presence."

Tom and his son concluded that while God may not have made old age, He certainly was the God of old age. But they had determined to do a lot more thinking about the problems of growing old and the fact that God is a good God.

Where Did Old Age Come From Anyway?

In Genesis 3 we read about the fall of mankind in his representative head, Adam. The Lord God had given Adam great equipment. God endowed him with perfect knowledge to understand and live in his environment and to carry out God's assignment for him. God gave Adam great freedom—the freedom to do as he pleased since he had a sinless nature and the power of contrary choice to remind him he was the created, not the Creator. God gave him a great warning: "You shall surely die." Adam made an irreversible mistake with eternal consequences. He died! And, in Adam his posterity died. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms that all mankind is dead (Eph. 2:1-5; Rom. 3:23; 5:12).

New students of the Bible often remark about the fact that Adam did not die when he disobeyed God. After all, didn't God come to the garden and talk with him? In fact, the Bible even says Adam lived to be 950 years old before he died. This observation appears correct. But the fact is Adam died! His physical body began the winding down process, an aging process, which culminated in his physical death 900 plus years later. You see, old age is the product of sin.

While Bible scholars have some divergent views regarding the multiple hundreds plus ages of early old age, the fact that the Bible records extraordinary life spans is not argued. The catastrophic event of the flood, the result of the aggregate decision to sin, most likely accounts for shortening of old age.

Genesis 4 through 9 records the corporate corruption of mankind. "Now the earth was corrupt. . . the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). God's response was Noah and his ark and the destruction of all flesh save that in the ark. In the process of the flood there is good reason to believe that atmospheric conditions were permanently altered. Modern science has helped us to understand how this probable change resulting in much great "exposure to the sun's rays" affects the aging process of our bodies. Immediately following the flood there is a diminishing of life span noted in the genealogical tables and notations of biblical history. It appears that God graciously shortened man's opportunity to increase his propensity for sin. By the time we reach the life of Abraham in Genesis 12 through 25, ninety was considered old age and childbearing had long since ceased (Gen. 18:11-14).

Moses writes in Psalm 90:10: "For all our days have declined in your fury; We have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our lives, they contain seventy years. Or if due to strength, eighty years."

By reason of medical science, mankind has been enabled to raise the average American's life span back to this biblical level from 47.9 years in 1900.

Can God be good and be the God of old age? Four observations help to answer this question.

1. God did not arbitrarily impose "old age" upon mankind. Man was created to live, not to grow old and die.
2. "Old age" is the result of sin. Man was warned that he would die. Old age is the final phase of the journey of death.
3. God seemingly shortened the life span in order to limit man's "refining of sin." If Genesis 6 through 9 is any indication of what we could expect from a society of sinners who live hundreds of years, God is indeed the God of old age who brings life to an end quickly.
4. God uses the limitations of old age to teach us who He is (Gen. 18:11-14). A good God uses old age as the final course in theology. It is His last opportunity for mankind to learn from his own weaknesses and frailty.

Overcoming Old Age

We all recognize that old age leads to death. If God is good, the question that haunts us is, "What has God done to counter old age?"

If this question were raised in a small group Bible study, no doubt someone would suggest that God sent Jesus Christ into the world in part to counter old age. Someone may even refer the group to Genesis 3:15 as God's seminal promise of the Saviour from the curse of death.

But exactly what impact does the redemptive work of Christ have upon old age? In answer to this question, the Christian learns a great theological truth which if integrated into his thinking will vitally affect his attitude toward his own aging—even if his aging process is fraught with the difficulties of Miss Susan.¹

The verb tenses of John 3:16 and John 3:36 are enlightening. Note the first reads, "Whoever . . . should not perish, but have everlasting life," and the second is like unto it, "He who believes in the Son of God has eternal life." These verses and others indicate clearly that eternal life is not a heavenly commodity to possess upon entrance into heaven. It is a present possession of the believer to invigorate life in time and space. As the source of life both bodily and spiritually was destroyed in Adam's fall, so the source of life both bodily and spiritually is infused at regeneration. (3)

Seeing the Good God in Old Age

Christianity is both a simple religion and an integrated, complex, theological and philosophical system capable of answering the most sophisticated questions of life. The painful question, "Did a good God make old age?" can be seen to be answered in the simple faith of Miss Susan who believed that a good God loved her when her fiance was killed, her economics depleted as she cared for her sisters, when her body became twisted with the pain of arthritis and when she was relegated to a nursing home. For other more questioning souls, the answers must be mined from the complexity of a systematic study of the Scriptures. One such complexity is seen in the simple antithesis of old age/death and eternal life. The former is overcome in the present possession of eternal life even though, should the Lord tarry, everyone will experience the aging process with the variety of attending hurts, pains, frustrations, and death. Thanks be to God, the war is won! (4)

¹The following Scriptures will enhance your understanding: Deut. 3:27; Matt. 25:46; John 3:15; 6:54-58, 10:28, 12:25; 17:2-3; Rom. 2:7, 5:21, 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19; Tit. 1:2, 3:7; Heb. 9:12; 1 John 1:2, 2:25, 5:11-12; Jude 21.

DID A GOOD GOD MAKE OLD AGE

Teaching Aids

(1) Introduction:

Begin by asking the class to call out life situations which they have seen addressed in a seminar format. For example, premarital preparation or PMS syndrome. Here are some more examples they may list: Marriage, parenting, youth ministry, divorce recovery, investing, wills and giving instruments, etc.

Now you should suggest that this quarter is going to be a seminar on aging. Aging is a fact of life. But since none of us like to admit that we are getting older, there has been a general proneness to ignore the ramifications until they are forced upon us by our own aging or that of a close family member.

You might at this time elicit the subjects that would be appropriate for such a seminar. If so, save the list. During the last session of the quarter attempt to address any that have not specifically been covered in this work using the principles and models learned from your study together.

The closing question for the introduction is: "When do you begin to prepare for the problems of aging and retirement?"

(2) Preparation for profiting from the Susan Mayhill story.

Where did old age come from? How do we relate the goodness of God to old age? These questions are the focus of this story.

From the following exercise you should be able to point out that perhaps God was gracious in speeding up the aging process and thereby shortening the propensity for sin. (For some background reading on the effects of the flood upon the atmosphere and the human body, see *The Genesis Flood* by John Witcomb.)

Have the class read Genesis 5, 6 and 11. After reading, ask them to write a paragraph on the possible relationship between the long life span, the condition of man's heart and the tower of Babel. The conclusion: Sharp minds plus accumulated knowledge and experience led to a sophisticated attempt to be God-like.

(3) In reading these verses it will be noted that the comment element is eternal life.

(4) Summary observations:

1. Aging and death were not in God's original plan.
2. Aging and death resulted from sin.
3. Aging and death are reality for man.

See Genesis 6:5-32 and note the expression "and he died."

4. What we believe about aging and death are vitally important:
 - a. We can become bitter old hermits who make our lives and the lives of those around us miserable.
 - b. We can buy into the world's view that we deserve to sit back and enjoy the "golden years" and fail to be good stewards of our lives.

- c. We can really understand that we were saved to serve regardless of our age or life condition and be about our Father's business.

Chapter 2

RETIREMENT: IS IT BIBLICAL?

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help student in defining the idea of vocation.
2. To help student consider the biblical concept of retirement.
3. To help student consider his role in retirement.

Lesson Outline:

- I. A Christian Definition of Vocation.
- II. A Biblical Precedent for Retirement.
- III. Case Study: Where Do I Fit?

Scripture Reading:

Numbers 4:1-47
Psalm 92

Mark will be sixty on his next birthday. At age thirty-eight he formed his own accounting firm. He and Mary decided they wanted to retire at age sixty. Mark researched his situation carefully. He solicited several tentative lucrative accounts and concluded he could attract at least three of them. These accounts in addition to the accounts he was servicing in his part-time activities he calculated would give him a sufficient operating base. He determined productivity for a forty-eight hour work week from April 16 to December 31 and a sixty hour work week from January 3 to April 15 would produce an adequate income to meet his goals. They agreed that Mary would be his administrative assistant and leave the office in time to be home when the children arrived home from school. Her summer hours would be flexible and the children would spend at least a month at camp.

He and Mary further agreed to two two-week vacations, one in late April or early May for the two of them, and one in July or August with their three children. They also agreed to two three-day weekends a year for them, as a couple, one of which would be in early February. This would be their mid-tax season break. They resolved to invest 20 percent of their income for retirement, to drive older economical automobiles, and to send the children to in state universities.

They have worked well together and achieved their goals. They have even been able to buy and pay for a retirement home in Ft. Myers, Florida where they have spent most of the family vacations. Mark is ecstatic at the prospect of fishing every day and walking the beach with Mary every morning and not ever having to be responsible to anyone again. They will have a very comfortable income of forty to fifty thousand dollars a year.

Jim and Jane, affectionately known as the J. J.'s by their peers at church, had the opportunity to move to the West coast where Jim would have become

vice-president of sales for his company when they were in their mid-thirties. One of the very attractive aspects of this promotion was the deferred income stock option annuity program given to corporate officers. However, after careful consideration Jim and Jane turned down the promotion and accompanying benefits. They reasoned that the stability of their family in the context of extended family and long term friendships as well as an extremely balanced church life were of more value to them than the apparent secure future income. Another strong consideration was Jim's ability to control his business travel in his present position.

However, this opportunity did excite their thinking about retirement and precipitated some indepth planning for Jim and Jane. During the next twenty years they augmented future Social Security and pension benefits with a regular mutual fund investment program. They reasoned that this account would provide sufficient income to continue to provide at least the automobile which had always been company furnished.

At age fifty-five Jim and Jane both enrolled in a correspondence biblical education program which they completed by age sixty. They also explained to their pastor their desire to become self-supporting church workers at retirement and requested an internship program "like the seminarians we have had here at the church." Between age sixty and sixty-two they each served in appropriate positions under various pastoral staff.

They planned a trip to Israel returning through Europe as their retirement celebration. The trip began with Easter weekend in Israel followed by a cruise on the Mediterranean and concluding with two days at the British Museum of Natural History in London. Jim and Jane returned to take up their new responsibilities as Minister of Assimilation and Assistant Director of Christian Education. Jim works twenty-five to thirty hours a week and Jane works twenty hours.

Jim and Jane are now seventy-two. Jane suffers with an arthritic knee which limits her mobility. The church has run a phone line into their home and covers the expense. Jane continues her work having shifted to responsibilities commensurate with her more limited physical circumstances. Jim has been accorded what he considers his greatest honor in life. He was ordained under the exception clause (seminary education was waived) and officially called as an associate pastor of his church.

A Christian Understanding of Vocation

In order to think through whether or not retirement is biblical, we must start with an understanding of the nature of work. American society has to a large degree made work synonymous with vocation and energy expended for remuneration. This may be observed, for example, by the attitude of many senior citizens about volunteer work. The general consensus of those enlisting senior citizens as volunteers is that they are not enthusiastic about non-remunerative work. Another facet of American thinking is that one's vocation is one's paid labor. While the American idea that remunerative work is one's vocation and all other work is one's avocation of one kind or another—a useful social convention—it does generate confusion from a Christian perspective.

For the Christian, vocation is the manner in which life is to be lived. My vocation is living Christianly. My avocation is my remunera-

tive work. The biblical conception of retirement then would be cessation from remunerative labor, not cessation from work. The American social conception so closely relates work and remuneration that ceasing to earn means ceasing to work. This convention practically impacts people's thinking and behaving to various degrees, but the absences of large numbers of retired people from committed schedules of service in the church and other Christian institutions indicates that the American convention has become the standard of the Christian community.

A Biblical Precedent for Retirement

(Num. 4:3, 30, 35, 43, 47; 8:25) (1) (2)

Exactly how the American standard of retirement at age sixty-five was established is not entirely clear. A number of sociological, economic and political forces converged to forge this present practice. These passages in Numbers provide several interesting and instructive concepts which are not incompatible with our American custom.

The first fact does not relate to retirement, but to entrance into the "professional" ministry. As one reads these various verses and chapters four through eight in their entirety, it becomes evident that men were allowed to serve in the tabernacle beginning at age twenty-five and were enrolled on the service roster at age thirty.¹ This assumes a period of preparation for life work, though certainly different than our American preparation.

The second fact of this passage engenders a discussion of the precise topic of this chapter. Here there is a biblical example of retirement. Some pastors might like to infer from this study that there certainly is modeled a clear basis for ministers to be able to retire and that right early. However, the second half of this conclusion is rather wishful thinking.

What is clear is that the Bible gives an undeniable example of God Himself establishing the concept of retirement. One could speculate upon the reasons for such a practice, but the Lord gives none. There is simply the teaching that an office bearer in the tabernacle service was to retire from his office and its professional responsibilities at age fifty (Num. 8:25-26).

The third fact to note here is very important. These "retirees" were to assist their fellow workers in the meeting tent in keeping with the office, but were not to discharge regular duties. The significant conclusion must be drawn that retirement was not the cessation of work. These individuals were to continue to be active and productive people. They are to enjoy the prophecy of Psalm 92:10-15 which says in part, "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree. . . . They will still yield fruit in old age."

¹It has always seemed curious to this writer that our American system of government imposed low end age limitations on Congress and the presidency and not educational requirements while the church imposes only educational limitations which allow for rather low end variable limitations on age. Perhaps this somewhat obscure reference should precipitate a discussion by way of principle regarding the age of ordination.

What we have in this passage is the example of God establishing retirement and providing the conceptual parameters for it. While there is not warrant for imposing the exact age limitations of the model, there is warrant to implement the principle that while one may retire from his income producing role in life, he is to continue with an active productive life of service for the kingdom of God.

The fourth commandment is another passage of Scripture which impinges upon the discussion of retirement. The commandment says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Ex. 20:9).

Dr. Jay Adams has provided some elucidating comments on this commandment. He writes:

" . . . The commandment does not require a person to be employed at the same task for the full length of his lifetime. Nor, indeed, does it even require him to be *gainfully* employed" (Adams, p. 22).

What this fourth commandment does do is call God's people to a regular routine (six days) of productive activity (labor) without age limitation.

In 1 Thessalonians the Apostle Paul gives what I call Paul's Chinese proverb, "No workie, no eatie." Some of the Thessalonians had misconstrued Paul's teaching and concluded that since Christ was coming back any day they would go ahead and "retire." Paul's instruction to these believers is sharp and to the point; if you don't work (provide for yourself), you are not to eat (i.e., depend upon others to provide for you).

"Well," someone will ask, "how can retirement be a biblical concept if I am to provide for myself?"

The answer to this question is quite logical. In our American system the majority of workers provide for themselves from deferred compensation during employment years. The minimum is Social Security (you may not agree with the system, but in reality it does provide a deferred compensation for the majority of workers). Social Security coupled with various other deferred compensation plans enable a worker to cease employment and still continue to provide for himself. It is possible, therefore, to retire and yet fulfill God's mandate to meet the basic needs of self support.

Furthermore, the implication is that if I cannot provide for myself in a retirement mode I ought not to retire. However, Jesus, Paul and James all make it clear that when I cannot provide for myself, the church has a responsibility to assist me.

Mark and Mary are not violating the Scriptures in terms of providing for themselves. They have wisely invested and planned their lives so that they are able to provide for themselves. However, there are some other biblical principles which they may well be side-stepping. Are they serving others? Are they using their gifts within the body of Christ? Are they regular in worship? Are they using their wealth for the kingdom? These are important questions.

There was a man who taught at a Christian univeristy some years ago. He was a Mark. He had retired at fifty-five and went to Florida to "fish every day." In less than two years he discovered that his life was empty. He called the president of the university and asked if there might be a place for him on the faculty. He said something like this: "I don't

need an income, I need a purpose. The Lord has given some excellent experience and I've come to the conclusion that passing it on to young people to help them serve the Lord in business would be much more rewarding and God-honoring than fishing every day." This man built an outstanding business department at his university. He was an inspiration to his students. He was a contented man.

The J. J.'s may seem like story book copy. "People really don't do such things," may be your response. Yes, their lives reflect conviction, control and commitment. But, are these qualities not intricate components of the Christian life? Perhaps the J. J.'s appear to be the ideal characters of an idealistic author for one of two reasons. First, because we find it hard to believe that anyone would elect to turn down the financial (materialistic) opportunities presented to them. And, second, because in the church we do not expect anyone to transition into a "new career" when retirement is finally attained. Perhaps our limited expectations limit the challenge.

Conclusion

Christian retirement is the cessation of regular remunerative employment for the purpose of sustenance. It is not the cessation of the expending of energy in productive activity. Dr. Adams observes;

"Work per se is not a curse from which we should look forward to being retired; it is a meaningful joy and privilege given by God in reflection of His own work of creation" (Adams, p. 23).

Retirement is not the cessation of work, but of employment (avocation). Work is an intricate part of life. Retirement frees people from an employment routine to engage their energies in productive activities of choice. There is nothing non-Christian about retirement. What determines the Christian quality of retirement is what is done with one's time and energy.

Here are some questions to ponder regarding Mark and Mary and the J. J.'s.

In light of the biblical materials considered in this chapter, answer the following questions comparing and contrasting the couples in the opening vignettes.

1. How do you think each couple's peers would feel about them six months after retirement?
2. List the good values each couple manifested.
3. If you visited Mark and Mary after five years what would you most likely expect to observe?
4. What did both couples do which should be instructive for us?

A Postscript

A Third Couple

John and Joan visit with their pastor and present the following facts to him. They desire his advice.

John and Joan were married three days after graduation from high school. John has been a faithful worker at the furniture manufacturing plant in town. He has given forty-four years of service as a warehouseman. Joan was a good mother to three fine girls who are now her friends. They take her out for lunch every Thursday during the school year.

Though economics were always tight, John and Joan decided that she would not enter the work force. Their three daughters went to the local state university, but for John and Joan the expenses were still high. Though health related expenses have been almost non-existent, John has not been able to save but two or three thousand dollars at any one time. They face retirement in just twelve months with the prospect of a pension and Social Security combined income of about \$1155.00 a month and a home that is paid in full. The taxes and insurance on their home runs about \$650.00 a year. Over all, they face about a \$6500.00 a year loss of income with no decrease in expenses.

John and Joan have also been faithful Christians. They tithe, teach Sunday school and have both served on various committees. They desire to increase these activities after John retires, but realize they must also generate some additional income. (3)

After listening to this data, Pastor Jones presented a number of ideas to them. They found themselves most excited when he suggested the possibility of them spending the summer working at the denomination's summer retreat. His proposal ran something like this:

"John, you could provide leadership for the maintenance staff and Joan, you would make a perfect hostess in the dining room. The church could lease your home for the three summer months for \$150.00 a month to provide housing for a summer intern couple. The retreat center would provide your housing for the summer and \$1500 each for your services. Eliminating your grocery costs, your utilities and your auto expenses and adding these savings to the potential income should drop your expected retirement deficit to about \$2,000.00."

They were both very encouraged after a conversation with Pastor Jones. They requested an interview with the retreat manager and indicated they would gather the family together to pray about this opportunity.

It is important to remember that retirement service/ministry is not limited to upper echelons of American society. The Lord's people cross all barriers of society and education. All believers have a role in the body of Christ. The challenge is to be creative as we prayerfully consider how we can serve. Also, it must be remembered that the Lord provides for His own. A step of faith may be just as appropriate for the retiree as it is for the young person who steps out trusting the Lord for financial, health, and ability acquisition in order to carry out a ministry. (4)

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RETIREMENT: IS IT BIBLICAL?

Teaching Aids

- (1) Have class members take a verse (Num. 4:3, 30, 35, 47; 8:25) and have each read his verse. Then draw from the class what principles they see in these verses which might apply to an understanding of the concept of retirement.
- (2) Divide the class into two groups. Have one group take the position that retirement is not a biblical position, but only a Western cultural phenomena. Have the other group take the position that retirement is a biblical concept. Give them five minutes to prepare and appoint a spokesman. Then have a ten minute debate. Each side gets three minutes to present, one minute to rebut and one minute to make a summary statement.
- 3) Divide your class into two groups. Have each group develop in some detail three possible alternatives which the pastor might suggest to this couple. Appoint a group leader and secretary. Have the groups report in fifteen minutes. Have each one give their best idea first. If there is time, list the other ideas on the blackboard.
- (4) Here are some specific points these questions should raise.
 1. Some would think that they are "crazy." They did not retire; they took on another career. Some would be saying, "Why are you doing all this work? You've earned the right to rest and let younger people do all this church work."
 2. Planning. Family time for vacations. Keep strict limits on work schedule. Keeping couple time important. Placing family above job.
 3. Mark and Mary may be bored. They may even be experiencing marriage problems. They may have realized that to stop being productive was not what they wanted and returned to some form of productive usefulness in church and society. Jim and Jane would be happy and excited. They may be frustrated with people responses (as all people in ministry are from time to time). Overall, they would express a fulfillment in life.
 4. Planning. Good administration of priorities. Family values retained in the goal achieving process.

Chapter 3

MYTHS, MYOPIA AND MAYTAGS

Lesson Objectives:

1. To dispel the generally accepted myths about aging.
2. To sensitize the student to the tendency to become self-focused.
3. To challenge the student to consider the Creator's life-long design for him.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Consideration of Six Frequent Myths.
- II. Aging Myopia - Two Causes:
 - A. Anxiety
 - B. Lack of Involvement in the Lives of Others
- III. Serving Like a Maytag.

Scripture Reading:

2 Timothy 4:7-8, 2:2-13
James 5:10-11
Genesis 49, 50

Myths

One of the necessary components of understanding the aging of ourselves and others is the demythologization of our cultural folklore about "old people." Demythologization is a fancy way of saying that it is important to investigate current assumptions about aging in our society and compare them with the facts. Furthermore, it means that our individual and collective behavior must be adjusted to the facts.

Myth One: Elderly people are nonproductive. A common belief is that the elderly neither desire to or are capable of being productive contributors to society. This myth no doubt has several roots. At least two of these roots society has planted and then harvested the results and created this myth.

Society arbitrarily established an age for retirement when the population was bulging with young people putting upward pressure on the job market. The extension of longevity for the masses was not yet perceived as problems. The retirees began to be viewed as people past this "magic age" of productiveness. Of course many became nonproducers. To be retired, early on, meant to be free not to work. Since productiveness was measured in terms of economic contribution, elderly retirees became non-productive. The establishment of a retirement age followed by an expected non-productive period, non-income producing period, contributed to this aspect of myth one.

The second root of this myth is the second standard by which older adults have been measured. It is the speed and vigor of youth in our fast paced society. However, accuracy, depth of perception, reliability and wisdom are valuable contributions to success. The older worker, while losing speed and vigor no doubt, brings these qualities to the marketplace and thereby contributes to common goals of productivity. A number of studies have verified that older workers are in fact perceptive, reliable and wise.

Furthermore, there are many dimensions to life beyond that of economic production. Frequently, the elderly provide a production of services which the young cannot precisely because economics is not a primary concern for the elderly.

Myth Two: Travel, leisure and entertainment are the chief concerns for the well elderly.

This sounds like another similar myth—the elderly of the north are anxiously awaiting retirement so they can move to Florida. While developers wish this were true, they spend a lot of money advertising to persuade older Americans to this way of thinking.

Much more typical are folks like Frank and Betty. They are seventy years old. They work part-time jobs, serve in social organizations and carry on an active church life in the community where they have lived for forty years. Others like Mary, who learned how to operate a computer and then took on the management of business affairs for a local Christian social service, are busy learning so that they can take on new challenges.

These folks enjoy more leisure. They travel more frequently, both for pleasure and family reasons, but their lives are full of rich rewarding service for the King and the kingdom.

Myth Three: The learning ability of older adults has diminished. All of us can think of an example where this is true. But is it true because of age or is it true because of a physiological problem with the individual? Researchers agree that though older adults learn less rapidly, they nonetheless learn effectively.

It is perhaps the belief of this very myth that impedes the learning curve. Believing this myth generates both fear and pride. Fear says, "I can't learn this." Pride says, "I can't learn this so I'd better not try or I'll look like a fool when I fail." Fear and pride are two things Christians are expected to deal with throughout life with their spiritual resources. Demythologizing the cultural myth that the learning ability of older adults has diminished may remove the temptation to fear and pride. The Christian has the resources to defeat the temptation even if the myth is believed.

Myth Four: The graded Sunday school and other groupings of our lives according to the phases of the life cycle have all contributed to the myth that people in these various categories do not need people involved in their lives from the other age classifications. While there has been a growing consensus that intergenerational interaction is vital to well being, a practical experience in a pilot project with senior adults exploded this myth for me.

While developing a program for a large Presbyterian Church in America, we invited a girls' chorus from the local Christian high school

to sing at the Christmas program. The chorus director suggested that her girls bring a sack lunch and join the senior adults for lunch. It was agreed. The tables were arranged in a long "U" with the senior adults seated around the outside of the "U". The girls spread out and sat on the inside of the "U." Both the girls and the seniors talked for weeks about the joy of that fellowship.

Senior adults need and desire intergenerational contacts. To believe otherwise is to believe a myth.

Myth Five: Older adults are physically weak is another myth. Of the frail elderly, those eighty-five and older, this myth approaches truth. But the vast majority of those sixty-two and over are in reasonably good health. They enjoy a vigor that is reflected in a plethora of activities from golf to square dancing.

It should be remembered that physical strength is an individual matter. It is a factor of health, exercise, diet and mental attitude. While there is a gentle decline in intensity of strength which accompanies aging, it certainly is a myth to attribute a general state of weakness to the older adult population.

Myth Six: Perhaps the saddest and most profound myth for Christians is that older adults are empty, uninteresting and possess little worthwhile wisdom.

This author was teaching a newly formed "Single Again" Sunday School class which had no age parameters. Somewhat to my surprise a widow seventy-one years old showed up in the class. I watched with great interest what response her presence would elicit from the mid-life divorcees. I was pleasantly surprised. Apparently these folks had not learned this cultural myth. Our senior member was accorded respect and yet welcomed as "one with us."

Her initial response reflected that she may have believed this myth. During an icebreaker exercise in which she was to question her partner and then introduce this person with the information she had gained, she commented, "Well, I can't tell you a lot about her. I talked too much so she would know a lot about me. I figured she needed to know a lot so she could find something interesting to say."

As you read through these myths, it should become clear that the Christian, of all people, should not fall prey to these myths and this one in particular. The Christian is responsible to view our aging society in a manner which values each individual person. Individual differences must be accepted and appreciated. Each of these myths may be true of individuals, but they are myths when applied to the older population as a whole. Love, acceptance and justice should be the hallmark of the church. As believers in the Scriptures, Christians cannot allow these myths to shape the way they view their own aging or the aging of others. It is imperative that our theology be ageless in its application except in those areas where God speaks an age-endowed word. (1)

Myopia

Susan: Pastor, I'm becoming concerned for my mother. When Dad died ten years ago we were all amazed at how well she rebounded and adjusted to widowhood.

Pastor: How old was she then?

Susan: She was fifty-two. Dad had truly been the head of the family so Mom had to learn to do everything. And she did. She has handled her own financial affairs, kept her home in repair, planned several trips and maintained an active social life.

Pastor: Sounds like a lady that you need not be too concerned about.

Susan: Well, I was not until about a year ago. Within about a month she had some serious problems with her left eye and was diagnosed with diabetes. In addition, her good friend, also a widow, was mugged. Whether a result of these things or not, I don't know, but in the past ten months, Mother does not seem to be able to think of anyone but herself.

Pastor: Susan, could you be more specific?

Susan: Well, yes I can. She talks about her smallest aches and pains like they were catastrophic. She relates them to the diabetes and speculates how severe they will become. She talks about how hard life will be when Social Security goes broke. You would have thought she owned millions in stocks the way she cried over "black Monday" when, in fact, the stocks give her less than a \$1,000 per year income. When her refrigerator had to be repaired (\$67) it generated weeks of speculation of what would be next.

But, you see, Pastor, nothing has really changed. Life is no different now except for a mild case of diabetes than it has been for the last ten years. I'm concerned. Is she becoming senile?

Pastor: The symptoms you have described do not sound like senility. I would suggest you run them by her doctor the next time you take her to his office and let him give you a medical opinion.

Your mother is developing what I have come to call "Aging Myopia." Almost all people develop this problem to some extent at some point in the aging process. "Aging myopia" is personal near-sightedness. It is a preoccupation with oneself. The self becomes the focus of attention both in the private world of thoughts and public life of relationships. Self concerns dominate conversations.

Sometimes an experience or cluster of experiences like your mother had will trigger this change of personality. What we would think of as a legitimate period of self concern becomes a way of life. The individual begins to measure everything in terms of an exaggerated concern for himself.

Susan: But, Pastor, how do we change this?

Pastor: Let me suggest that you ask your mother to visit our counseling center. Pastor Jones is not only a skilled biblical counselor, he is also a senior citizen who has experienced some physical difficulties. But, in spite of these problems he has led the development of this ministry. (2)

“Aging myopia” is usually the result of one of two causes. The most common root cause is anxiety. Often there are increasing occasions for anxiety as we grow older. These may vary from health concerns to financial austerity. All of these anxiety triggers share a common root—a lack of trust in our sovereign God. Consider these two passages and ask the question, “Is there an age limitation on them?” (Phil. 4 and Matt. 6).

The second cause of “aging myopia” is the lack of an “other orientation to life.” The Lord tells us that we find our lives by losing them (Matt. 16:24-28). When we are busy investing ourselves in ministry to others, we are in effect weaving corrective lens so that even when we look in the mirror of life our perspective on self is accurate. The elderly who would save their lives must lose them.

There was a dear woman I knew as a boy growing up. She had every possible occasion to develop “aging myopia” early in life. She lost seven children. She had surgery thirteen times before age fifty. She experienced several other serious physical problems. But this lady had an “other orientation” to life.

Each year after Christmas she would begin to make the rounds of stores like Cloth World where she would buy remnant material. From these materials she would fashion twenty-five to thirty children’s dresses which she wrapped and gave to needy children at Christmas. At age sixty-two when her son went to college, she returned to a sewing factory and worked for six years to contribute to his education. Later she lived with him and his family. Because of severe hearing problems she no longer attended church. But each Sunday her preacher son and his family returned home to a full course Sunday dinner.

This mother did not develop “aging myopia” because she kept investing herself in others even though her world of others, the last ten years of her life, was restricted almost entirely to family.

Maytags

If you have never owned a Maytag washing machine you probably do not appreciate these ads. A family with whom I spent much time in my late teens and early twenties owned a Maytag. When the oldest

of five was fourteen or fifteen the washer finally had to have some rebuilding.

The Lord built most of us “Maytags.” Statistics tell us that only 5 percent of the aging population are in nursing homes. Even when with one chronic health problem, a rather common experience for those over sixty-five, most individuals do not find a well-rounded lifestyle hindered.

The analogy of the “Maytag” gives further than simply long life with little attention. The Maytag Company created their washers not just for long life with little attention, but for a long life of service with little attention. So God created man for a long life of service.

Before the demand to be on the job was terminated by retirement, most folks (at least those working) served forty hours plus per week. Some only served to gain a pay check to enjoy the weekend. Others were much more concerned for providing for their families. However, at retirement the thoughts of traveling, fishing, golfing, etc., forty hours plus a week danced in their heads. Retirement for these folks equals unplugging a perfectly good “Maytag.”

As you progress through this quarter, consider your retirement life in terms of the Creator’s design. There will be opportunities along the way to help you make some evaluations, options suggested for your consideration, and challenges to your perhaps contemplated complacency.

MYTHS, MYOPIA AND MAYTAGS

Teaching Aids

(1) Ten Minutes

1. Have the class contribute other myths they have heard. Make a list on the board.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or more (depending on the size of the class. Have the person with the oldest living parent be moderator of each group). Assign two myths or more, include those your class has added to each group, and ask the group:
 - a. to share an illustration of one of these myths which they have observed
 - b. to suggest a biblical reference to refute this myth, and
 - c. to suggest some ways the class members can help defeat each of these myths.
3. Have each group's moderator assign a secretary and have that person report the group's findings. Encourage discussion and the raising of questions.

(2) Ten Minutes:

Have your class act as a consultant to Susan. Perhaps someone would be willing to role play and be Susan. This person could interact with the class. Have the group develop a list of projects that could help Susan minister to her mother. Here are some guidelines you might help the class develop.

1. Take mother to class on diabetes. Understanding medical problems often diminishes speculation and reaction.
2. Do a Bible study with her, or better yet, have her in a small group study on anxiety. A study of its causes and biblical cures would be helpful.
3. Go with her to Pastor Jones for a series of counseling sessions.
4. Find another older lady to engage her in a ministry activity.

(3) Ten Minutes:

Prepare a Bible study using the following texts. Focus on continuing service recognizing that the "laundry loads" can become very heavy at times.

- 2 Timothy 4:7-8 - completing God's course for our lives.
- 2 Timothy 2:2-13 - commitment to passing the things of God from one generation to another.
- James 5:10-11 - Endurance in serving regardless of the conditions.
- Genesis 49 & 50 - Joseph's service to family until his death.

Chapter 4

AGING GRACEFULLY

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help the student consider how to age gracefully.
2. To lead the student through biblical insights which enhance graceful aging.
3. To encourage the student to plan for change.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Inevitability of Change.
- II. Principles for Aging Gracefully.
 - A. Contentment is Great Gain.
 - B. Getting Right Makes You Right.
 - C. Distinguishing Between the Inevitable and the Opportunity.
 - D. Planning to Change.

Scripture Reading:

Philippians 2:1-14

A pastor friend approached a meeting of his church officers. He was running late and the men had engaged in some lighthearted conversation while waiting for his arrival. As my friend stepped into the room he noticed all heads turned toward the eldest member of the group who was in his early seventies. The gentleman's reply, "Don't look at me, fellows, it's not over yet," brought a chorus of good natured laughter. At that moment my friend's presence was noted and a man said, "Oh, hello, Pastor. We had been discussing when the joys of marital intimacy ceases. You just heard Jack's answer."

Jack was aging gracefully. He retained a good sense of humor. He was able to chuckle with the men and was able to talk about the intimacy of his personal life refreshingly.

"I hate the idea of growing old," said forty-five year-old Mary. "I refuse to let aging change me," she continued. "I am going to do everything I do that makes me me until the day I die." Mary's determination may be overstated and therefore not sound very graceful, but her intention is clear. Her attitude is positive.

Change is difficult, but change is inevitable. Growing older gracefully is dependent upon how we process change. Our attitude is the result of how we have learned to think about the Lord, life and living. Aging gracefully does not start at sixty-five or seventy, but is an integral

function of our lives, particularly our adult lives. The Apostle Paul said to the Philippians, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. . . to abide in the flesh is far more needful for you. . . and for your furtherance and joy of faith. . . ." Paul's attitude was an other-orientation. His attitude was realistic, "To die is gain." His attitude is an attitude of continual growth and service. Notice the words in italics in Philippians.

"Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be *like-minded*, having *the same love*, being *of one accord*, of *one mind*. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in *lowliness of mind* let each *esteem others better than themselves*. Look not every man on his own things (only), but every man *also* on the things of *others*" (Phil. 2:2-4).

". . . *work* out your *own* salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. . . . Do all things without *murmuring and disputing*" (Phil. 2:12-14).

Childhood and old age have been the victims of the same myth. Each has been depicted as a time of peace and serenity. Common observation and scientific studies both indicate otherwise. Gerontological studies reveal that older people experience more stress than any other group. The loss of health, the death of a spouse, the crisis of retirement, and the empty nest are but categories of stress impacting events. If a biblical attitude has not been cultivated before the onset of these stressors, aging gracefully will be a difficult task at best. (1)

At age fifty-six James had to give up farming. He was not ready to retire and economics dictated that he must find another career. His wife, Martha, his junior by six years, decided to move to the city with her son to start a college degree in art while James remained in the country to liquidate the farm business. Shortly after her arrival to the city, his son, age thirty-six, was diagnosed with cancer. Six months later the doctor told James that he would permanently lose sight in his right eye within a year.

James accumulated more stress in one year than he had previously experienced in twenty-five years. His experience is not unusual. All these crisis stressors demanded change from James.

But the kind of changes which James experienced as part of the life cycle, coupled with the intergenerational individual crises of his family, are not the only aspects of life which call for adaptability. Think of the development of our culture and the multitude of modifications which are necessary. It is a different world than the one in which you started.

In the mid-seventies I took my father with me from Philadelphia to California where I was conducting a seminar. He had not flown since 1920 when he had taken his only flight in a by-wing trainer. On our return trip we had a stop without a change of planes in Atlanta. My father turned to me and asked if we were home. I told him we were not, but that we were in Atlanta, Georgia, and would be back in Philadelphia in about one hour and forty-five minutes. He pondered my response and then said, "Boy, kid, this is the fastest train I've ever been on!"

My father's world had changed drastically and he had selectively more and more chosen to ignore the changes so that he could no longer synthesize experience. Perhaps a less dramatic and more subtle illustra-

tion of the rapidity of change is my experience with computers. In 1986 when I moved to St. Louis my subscription to "Personal Computing" ran out and I decided not to renew it until we had moved to our new home. It was the Spring of 1988 before I began reading the magazine again. In less than two years the personal computing industry had made such radical changes that I had to extensively expand my vocabulary and knowledge base in order to appreciate the articles.

It occurred to me that a wonderful difference between a computer and a human is that humans can be "updated" if they develop a biblical attitude toward change. My old Tandy computer, on the other hand, has a "ridgit attitude" which means its adaptability is extremely limited.

Is there a technique, an association, or a government program to enable us to process the changes of life gracefully? Or, are we the victims of chance upon whom life plays a series of bad jokes? Someone observed, "A lifetime of rich living should yield the ability to absorb change as it comes." The correctness of this comment is conditioned by the meaning of "rich living." If "rich living" means the development of a biblical world and life view integrated into one's practice of life, it is true.

The best way to prepare for the changes which accompany aging is by learning how to think, act and react biblically in daily life. The person who learns to live by the principles of Philippians 4:4-9, for example, will not become captured by worry when he is released from his company at age sixty-one.

1. Rejoice in the Lord rather than complain or rehearse the problem (v. 4).
2. To submit (root word here in Greek is gentleness) to God who is near (v. 5).
3. Stop worrying and start praying (v. 6).
4. Think right (the idea here is dwelling upon the positive) (v. 7).
5. Do right (obey God and serve others) (v. 9).

In addition to the major principles of Christian living there are four specific guidelines which can aid us in aging gracefully. (2)

Contentment is Great Gain

We can grow old gracefully by learning the area of contentment. The Apostle Paul said from a jail cell, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Phil. 4:11). Somewhere one of the ancient Greek philosophers wrote, "He who is of a calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age."

To learn godly contentment is to learn to be at peace with the ebb and flow of life. Godly contentment as seen in Paul's life was not inactivity or resignation to inevitable demise. His was an active life of ministry within his circumstances while trusting God to effect His purposes in his life.

Getting Right Makes You Right

Since you are reading this most likely you have had a conversion

experience. By His Holy Spirit God has convicted you of sin, regenerated your heart and you have lifted up your empty hands of faith to say, "I believe in Jesus and His finished work on the cross for me." You have experienced reconciliation with God.

However, no matter how inconsistent it may be, many Christians have not been reconciled to their parents, siblings or other significant people in their lives. One of the most important principles for aging gracefully is "getting right makes you right." Someone who is living with unreconciled relationships does not have the good mental attitude it takes to gracefully age. Thank God, these relationship problems—often after twenty to forty years—can be resolved. (3)

Until later life these problems are often masked by work, child rearing and other activities associated with the more demanding years of life. However, the increased leisure time, the decline in energy, and one's own impending death often surface these problems (bitterness and resentment are quite frequent) of youth and childhood. While memories of being molested as a child, being treated extremely unfairly, or being abandoned, to name just a few, are so vivid that they cannot be erased from the memory, they can be faced and worked through biblically (even when the offending individual has died).

Getting these relationships right brings a person into right relationship with the offending or offended party, the Lord God and oneself. Reconciliation with our significant others relieves our conscience and frees our energy for positive living.

Distinguish Between The Inevitable and The Opportunity (4)

The Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the
SERENITY to accept the things
I cannot change;
COURAGE to change the things I can;
and
WISDOM to know the difference—
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships
as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it:
Trusting that He will make all things
right if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this
life and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next. Amen.*

Some change is thrust upon us. The death of a mate must be faced by one member of a couple. This is inevitable. Retiring from the company is inevitable for many individuals. Growing old gracefully depends upon distinguishing these inevitable changes and preparing for them. Some people fight bereavement with anger, protest or denial. In the process they become unreasonable, ugly or depressed and often present intolerant situations to the family.

Learning biblical doctrine and talking with one's spouse about death and dying helps to prepare one for the inevitable. Again, discussing retirement and making plans together help with the "must" changes.

Deciding to control the effects of aging by fighting health declines, age discrimination and other phenomena of aging should be part of one's approach to growing older. These situations present us with challenges and opportunities. Becoming adaptable is graceful.

A dear friend, we'll call him Joe, was released from his company when it was sold. He was fifty-nine years old. He decided he could control the effects of his aging in this situation. He assembled a resume which highlighted his accomplishments and reflected the nature of his experience while selectively deleting his age. He mounted a job campaign including the mailing of 200 professionally printed resumes. The Monday following the Friday of his last week with his former company, Joe started his new job having edged out four competing younger men.

Joe understood Romans 12:1-3. He took responsibility for his life and gracefully distinguished the situation as one whose end was inevitable only if he did not take positive action. With his life dedicated to the Lord and a proper view of himself he prayerfully moved forward.

Part of growing older gracefully is accepting that our Lord is still in the process of growing us. One of the ways He causes us to grow is by allowing difficulties to come into our lives. With age there comes an increase in difficulties to each of us. If we determine to adapt to these painful situations as Job did his, than we shall have a growth profile. Consider these statements from Job:

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him; but I will defend mine own ways before him" (13:15).

"But he knoweth the way I take; when he hath tested men, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

Plan to Change

Do not plan to be disappointed. Having such unrealistic expectations as simply relaxing and enjoying the fruits of your labors in peace and tranquility will only lead to boredom or disappointment. The game of life takes energy all the way to the end. Plans need to be concrete and realistic. To put it another way, goals must be attainable. (5)

Joshua briefed the people of Israel as they readied to embark into the Promised Land saying, "You have not passed this way before. . . Consecrate yourselves. . . that you may know the way by which you shall go" (Josh. 3:4-5). We have not traveled the whole journey of life. We are about to do so. Joshua's words of exhortation are applicable to us. Consecration in the Old Testament scheme was an active preparation not a passive utterance of the mouth. We need to consecrate ourselves

for the aging phase of life in this Old Testament sense of the word.

Some years ago it became evident that young couples were entering into marriage with little or no preparation. In recent years herculean efforts have been mounted in the church directed toward preparing young couples for marriage. But very little has been done in the church to help prepare adults for the aging years. This study is an attempt to contribute to this planning.

From high school through the working cycle, one's time perception is molded by a vortex of activities. Each month and each year seems to come and go more rapidly. As a counselee once told me, "I plan 125 percent of my time. As a result I never finish and can never relax." Such filling, even over filling one's schedule, generates the perception that time is flying. When you were twenty you wanted time to fly. The sooner graduation and your wedding arrived the better. But at fifty-plus the relentless velocity of birthdays down the narrowing gorge of time becomes frightening.

At age twenty or thirty Scripture verses like "Redeem the time for the days are evil," or "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it heartily as unto the Lord," had time implications. What we understood from these verses was to do all you can do as fast as you can do it. However, at age fifty what we might hear is choose carefully, thoughtfully and prayerfully what you spend your time doing and savor each activity recognizing you are doing it for the Lord.

In other words, plan to fill your time with less activities and enter into these activities with greater intensity, greater sensitivity and allow yourself the time to treasure the many dimensions of God's handiwork in your life and through your life.

While planting a garden I was bemoaning the wait until harvest. A dear gracious Southern lady reminded me that the vegetables would be more tasty if I enjoyed the gardening process. She was right!

Planning is not something with which most people are unfamiliar. In fact for most middle and above income Americans, the schedule controls them. They are captive of their plans.

Planning which aids in aging gracefully is of two kinds. The first has to do with interest. Not the interest accumulating on the investments, though that is very important, but the interests which one is developing in life. Not infrequently a man retires and after several months is either bored with life and/or driving his wife into a state of despair because he vegetates before the television. A person's interest base will not be broadened without planning. Research indicates that most people do after they retire what they did before. Leisure without interests is not luxury. Without preparation for the enforced leisure of retirement, most people will not grow old gracefully. Though a pity, the common conception is that learning is for youth, work is for middle age and leisure is for old age. The Christian conception of life is a healthy balance of these components throughout life. (5)

AGING GRACEFULLY

Teaching Aids

Introduction:

Have the class briefly answer the following questions:

1. Why are we here?
2. What's in it for me? What do I get out of life?
3. Why am I important?
4. How can I use life?

These questions elicit discussion of purposefulness of life, what makes a person valuable, personal values and the manner in which people utilize the life they have been given.

From this discussion, move on to the idea that if God continues to give life, aging and changing are inevitable. Aging and changing bring stress to life. In this midst of stress, how can a person age gracefully? Is the question to be considered in this lesson?

(1) Illustrative material:

Definition of an attitude: "A way of thinking, acting or feeling." Attitudes like gardens must be cultivated. Use the idea of cultivation as an illustration of the process of developing an attitude.

Cultivate means: "To prepare and to use the land, to raise crops by plowing it, taking care of growing seeds by removing the weeds and allowing the plants to develop."

An attitude is cultivated by education, training of the mind to mold thinking, practice of new behaviors and acknowledging emotions and using them as a signal of one's current perceptions.

(2) Exercise (Five minutes for interview; five to seven minutes for board exercise):

Have class break into couplets to do a role play. Ask the person with the youngest grandchild to play the role of the Apostle Paul and the other person to play the role of a reporter. The reporter asks Paul this question: "Paul, I've heard it said that you have learned to be content here in this Roman prison. Could you tell me your secret?" "Paul" is to then respond with his reasons/explanation for being content. The reporter is to then report to the class. Give each reporter opportunity to present his gleanings. Record these on the board and then develop the ideas in the chapter using class suggestions as much as possible.

(3) Study these verses and develop a statement of principle from each one. Lead the class in doing the same exercise (twelve minutes).

Matthew 18:21

Mark 11:25-26

Luke 17:2-4

Luke 23:34

Ephesians 4:32

Point out that when we forgive we free the other person and we are freed. We make the decision to accept the hurt and no longer hold the offense against the other person. In so doing, that person and his evil deed no longer saps our strength as we dwell upon it.

- (4) Ask the class to share the story of a family member or friend who took a difficult situation which was part of their aging process and turned it into an opportunity. For example, someone who lost a spouse, but after fifteen months volunteered to become a house parent in the dorm on a mission station five years ago who has been writing glowing letters of satisfaction every since going.

You will find in nearly every group of older adults that at least one person will have a story to tell. If no one does, use the story in the chapter. Bring in the Scriptures (Rom. 12:1-3; Job 13:15; Job 23:10) and others that come to your mind to undergird the idea that God is in control and would have us use each situation as a growth opportunity regardless of age.

- (5) Brainstorm (five minutes):

In conclusion, have the whole class participate in brainstorming the following three subjects.

- a. Ways of planning to slow down (“to smell the roses”):
 1. Treat your schedule like your diet—remove the fat.
 2. Train yourself in spiritual disciplines.
 3. Take an inventory of the intensity of energy expended in your various activities and ask, “Can I use it better,” “Can I do without it,” “Does it have eternal value?”
- b. Ways to increase satisfaction in each activity of life:
 1. Prayerfully choose activities which fit a predetermined set of priorities.
 2. Participate in each activity as if the Lord had written out your assignment.
 3. Project sufficient time for each project to evaluate your satisfaction level and make a list of those things which produced satisfaction and a second list of those things which deterred from satisfaction.
 4. Praise the Lord for the health, strength, etc. at whatever level He gives it at any given time.
 5. Pass along your satisfaction by sharing it with others.
- c. Ways of developing new, broader, deeper interests:
 1. Ask afresh (for the first time) what would the Lord have me to do?
 2. Arrange a time or place to expose yourself to whatever new idea or activity you desire to consider.
 3. Actively participate with others to gain a comfort zone for the new.

Chapter 5

CALEB'S CORPS

Lesson Objectives:

1. To establish Caleb as a model for senior adults.
2. To expose the student to the component of faith in Caleb's life.
3. To expose the student to the component of consecration in Caleb's life.

Lesson Outline:

- I. The Man, Caleb.
- II. The Components of Caleb's Mental Attitude.
- III. The Challenge of Caleb's Corp.

Scripture Readings:

Numbers 13
Joshua 14

The name, Ira D. Sankey, is not a name commonly known among the Christian populous of the 1980s. A biographical sketch of the well-known evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, would no doubt mention Sankey, but not in great detail. Yet, Sankey was an integral part of Moody's ministry. The career of Joshua in God's service encompasses a whole book by his name as well as a number of other passages. But commentary on Caleb's life is limited.

Caleb was the other "good guy" who gave a faithful and favorable report in response to their mission when the spies returned from the Promised Land (Num. 13:6, 20; 14:6). While Caleb's name is mentioned thirty-two times in six different Old Testament books, we are left to assume the nature and amount of his contribution to Joshua's assignment as the successor of Moses. Like Sankey to Moody, the assumption of faithful and intense service of Caleb to Joshua is certainly warranted.

There are several things recorded in the Scriptures about Caleb and his actions which are of particular interest and importance to maturing adults.

Caleb is one of those biblical and historical characters whose life provides us with a model for Christian living. Rahab models the hope of redeeming faith for the dregs of society. Jacob models the possibility of characterological change as is exhibited in his name change from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel. Peter offers a model of change to the common, course and arrogant man. But Caleb offers a unique model. His is a model of vigor, vigilance and victory for the maturing adult. Caleb's Corps is a congregation of conquering senior adults.

Looking at the life of Caleb, we discover that he was forty years of age when his first exploit of godly service is recorded. Caleb approaches

Joshua to remind him of Moses' promise of an inheritance in the Promised Land (Jos. 14:6-9).⁽¹⁾ While speaking with Joshua, he tells us that he was forty years old when he was commissioned as one of the spies. There is no doubt that Caleb was involved in Israel's religious life prior to this assignment to the spy brigade. He was at the very least a ruler in Israel (Num. 13:2-3). In a theocracy this position, a ruler in Israel, was religious in nature. However, there is no indication that Caleb was a man of any greater spiritual development or personal character than any of the others chosen by Moses for this mission.

The commission was given (Num. 13:17). The mission was planned (Num. 13:18-20). The plan was executed (Num. 13:21-25). Caleb, along with Joshua, was challenged by the opportunity. His faith was stretched to pursue God's Promised Land. Whatever the level of his spiritual condition previously, we observe that from mid-life forward his life is characterized by faith and consecration.

Faith (Num. 13:30)

Faith is the necessary ingredient of success for the Christian. Faith is that quality of character by which we believe God's promises and act upon them. Faith sees obstacles as God's opportunities to demonstrate His power. Faith sees problems as challenges. Faith sees complications as curves in the road. Faith sees delays as a Sovereign God's roadside rest stops. Faith understands frustrations as the tools of a sanctifying Father.

Caleb was possessed of faith. The description of the majority report (Num. 13:28-29) of the obstacles to taking the Promised Land would elicit the two responses recorded. The majority response was fear. Caleb responded with faith.

Can you not hear the majority?

"Yes, this is a great land. But the people are well fortified. One race that lives among them are all giants. If we go up against them it is sheer disaster. Our belongings will be confiscated. Our women will be misused. Our children will become slaves and we will be killed. If God wants us to have that land He'll have to clean out those pagans first."

Caleb can hold his peace no longer. He jumps to his feet and cries out, "Let us go at once and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:20 RSV).

The majority answers him with a chorus of protest stirring the emotions of the nation. Mass hysteria sets in (14:1-3). Moses and Aaron humble themselves before the people (14:5). The faith of Caleb and Joshua motivates them to risk their lives and challenge the entire nation (14:6-10). Their faith in the power of God is clearly evident.

Faith in God is the key element for those who would join Caleb's Corps. Finances, health, objections of family and friends, ridicule for lack of specific training and other obstacles will stand in your way. Only faith in the God of the universe will provide the capacity to overcome. And sometimes God will delay or circumscribe your accomplishments by the lack of faith in those around you, just as he did in Caleb's case.

In such instances, remember his example. He was faithful through

forty years while God disciplined the rest of the nation. His faith did not wane. He was ready to take his mountain when they got to the Promised Land.

Consecration (Josh. 14:8-9; Deut. 1:36)

Since all the annotations which refer to Caleb's following the Lord date from his experience on the spying expedition, there seems to be good reason for understanding this encounter to be a life-changing episode. He was faced with the choice of going with the majority (Num. 13:28-29), whose interpretation of reality left God out, or becoming the articulate minority willing to view the challenges of life through the potentiality of God (Num. 13:30; 14:5-9).

The majority were not ready to move on God's promise. They already had not believed God nine times (Num. 14:22) and desired to go back to Egypt rather than trust God to go before them and defeat the enemy. No doubt Caleb realized that he was laying his life on the line when he made his minority report and later pled with the people not to side with the majority report (Num. 14:10).

We have opportunity to come to the point of consecration at various times in life. Quite often the idea of consecration is limited to a point in time at which a Christian presents his life a "living sacrifice" to his God (Rom. 12:1-2). While this is a significant event in the life of a believer, it must be particularized from time to time. This incident in the life of Caleb led to the particularization of his consecration. He made a conscious decision and a public declaration of his intent to follow the Lord regardless of the cost.

It is important to understand that Caleb's response of faith and consecration did not result in immediate personal blessing.

He was assured that he would not die in the wilderness with the rebels. However, he had to wander around the wilderness, live on manna and put up with the regular occasions of disobedience on the part of Israel and the punishments which resulted. If you are in Caleb's Corps or decide to join it, remember that you should not expect things all of a sudden to go well. Often those whom you serve will forget to thank you or may even curse you.

In Caleb there is encouragement for all of us in mid-life and beyond. In various ways and at various times, the Lord brings occasions into our experience which present us with the option to choose to make course corrections in our lives — opportunities to express faith and consecrate ourselves to follow Him fully.

Caleb's Corps is populated by those who in mid-life make such a course correction. This study could be an opportunity for someone to make such a life-changing decision. The quiet response of the heart to the "still small voice" can produce as dramatic effects for the glory of God in our lives as can some traumatic experience or special occasion like a trip to the mission field.

Those who join Caleb's Corps may do so by following another example set by him. In Joshua 14:10 is the record of Caleb's determination to assume a most strenuous task and trust the Lord to enable him

to complete it. Caleb was eighty-five when he came to Joshua and said, "Give me this mountain."

There is an assortment of mountains to be taken for the Lord. And there are many senior adults today who have the unique opportunities to take these mountains for the Lord and His church. These opportunities arise out of the uniqueness of our Western culture. God has abundantly blessed us materially. Retirement programs coupled with Social Security programs, as well as personal investments, have the potential to free hundreds of thousands of older Americans to conquer "mountains." The question for nearly every older adult at some point in his life is not "Shall I conquer a mountain?" but, "Which mountain shall I conquer?" (2)

To help you think through the challenge of joining Caleb's Corps, here is one project to enable you to identify some possible mountains and some questions you need to answer:

1. List ten mountains senior adults can conquer. (3)
2. Questions important to any conqueror. (4)
 - a. What kind of attitudes does a conqueror possess?
 - b. What kind of sacrifices does a conqueror make?
 - c. What kind of resources does a conqueror need access to?
3. Develop an application for each of these questions for senior adults. Be specific. (5)
 - a. How can senior adults develop the attitudes of a conqueror?
 - b. What actual sacrifices might senior adults have to make to conquer their mountains?
 - c. What resources do senior adults have to enable them to conquer these mountains?

CALEB'S CORPS

Teaching Aids

(1) Since you cannot assume that your class is familiar with the man Caleb just because of their own maturity, you may introduce Caleb by doing a class research project on him. What can we learn about Caleb from the following verses? The class could do this as a group, or you might divide a larger class into two groups and either allow both groups to go through all the passages or divide the passages between the groups. You might divide the task into searchers for three categories of information. Have the class look for character traits, actions and facts. Later they might discuss the relationship between character traits and actions.

Numbers 13:

- verse 3 (v. 6) - He was a leader in the tribe of Judah.
- verses 17-20 - had specific orders.
- verses 21-25 - obedient, followed orders to the letter.
- verses 26-27 - participates in the factual report.
- verse 30 - expresses faith.

Joshua 14:

- verse 7 - forty years old when commissioned to be spy.
- verse 8 - followed the Lord wholeheartedly.
- verse 9 - was promised a reward by Moses because of his consecration and faithfulness.
- verse 10 - receipt of reward delayed forty-plus years.
- verse 11 - retained his physical strength.
- verse 12 - asked for his promised reward.
- verse 13 - received reward.

If the class does not note it, you will want to point out that his faithfulness and consecration did not result in an immediate reward. He wandered around with the rest of those who did not have faith for forty years.

Draw a parallel between Caleb being willing to take on the most strenuous task of his life at eighty-five and senior adults taking on a ministry mountain even though it is something they have never tackled in their life time. The corps is looking for a "few" good men/women—not the Marine Corps, but Caleb's Corps.

From your reading of the chapter, "Caleb's Corps," lead a discussion of the kinds of mountains seniors can tackle and the advantages the Lord has given in Western culture to seniors. Such advantages include retirement programs, Social Security and the opportunity to have acquired personal wealth. In addition there is the fact of continuing good health, educational programs (often almost free to senior adults), assistance programs to facilitate service, unparalleled mobility and unlimited opportunities.

(2) Do some research. Start by speaking with your pastor to find a retired person who has invested him/herself "taking a mountain for God." You may interview this person to obtain a testimony of his/her experience (perhaps you could solicit a teenager to help you by making

video tape to play in class of this interview).

Here is a testimony you may read if you cannot find a "live" one.

Testimony

John was a Viet Nam chopper pilot. He survived two tours of duty returning with several decorations including a purple heart. Upon his return to the States he began to pursue the "good life."

Realizing that working for someone else would not bring him the quickest or the best return upon the investment of his time and talent he decided upon going into business for himself. However, all did not go well. By age forty-five he was facing bankruptcy and other personal problems were intense.

Until this point in life, John had believed in God and attended church. But he was not a disciple of Jesus Christ. It was during these difficult days that he was confronted with Christ and the Great Commission. Following his conversion, John decided that serving Jesus Christ was more important than the good life.

Out of this encounter John emerged with a commitment to serve and began doing so immediately. Over a period of time he discovered that the Lord opened to him a ministry which takes him all over the United States ministering to individuals and churches.

Being a career military man, he was able to retire in his early forties. By careful management of his personal funds and expenses, he established a cost of living commensurate with his retirement income. This frugality has made it possible for him and his wife to be able to be involved in ministry together.

(3) Ten mountains senior adults can conquer: (Here are some examples):

- a. Return to college and take thirty hours of class to become certified to teach in area that builds upon possessed college degree. Then invest efforts teaching in an inter-city school (preferably a Christian school).
- b. If history was a hobby, join forces with a high school history teacher and work out some ways you can teach special sections, or create special teaching aids to make the class come alive.
- c. Use administrative skills by going to a mission field and providing consulting services.
- d. Become a coach for a church sport team or develop a league among several churches providing the administrative skill and time to make it work.
- e. Become a special assistant to the pastor for project management.
- f. Fill a receptionist position for your church four or five mornings a week and free the pastor's secretary for other matters.
- g. Provide the typing and editing skills to help your church publish your pastor's sermons.
- h. Evaluate your skills, your dreams, your potential to learn. Set your sights. And, as the youth say, "Go for it."

- (4) Some attitudes, sacrifices, and resources of a conqueror:
- a. Attitudes
 - 1. Determination
 - 2. Courage
 - 3. Confidence
 - 4. Desire to succeed
 - b. Sacrifices
 - 1. Personal time
 - 2. Privacy
 - 3. Personal desires
 - 4. Personal freedom
 - c. Resources
 - 1. Character traits which enable him to complete the task.
 - 2. Friends to confide in and draw upon.
 - 3. Wealth or access to support.
 - 4. Developed attitudes which sustain him in difficult times.
 - 5. Tested and proved faith in the living God.
 - 6. Confidence that God will enable him to do the task.

(5) These can be drawn from the class. It is an excellent way to conclude the class. When the list has been put on the board, copy it and duplicate it for the group. Send it out early in the week with the encouragement for each class member to pray for the Lord's guidance in choosing a "mountain" and to write out a plan of action for themselves which includes a recognition of the attitudes needed for this project, the sacrifices required and the resources that will need to be invested.

Chapter 6

WEARINESS IN WELL DOING: A STUDY IN OVERCOMING

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help student identify the three prominent problems for senior adults to overcome in order to serve fully in their latter years.
2. To help student realize that the Lord is sufficient to enable older adults to overcome obstacles to service.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Overcoming Physical Problems
- II. Performance Problems
 - A. Recognizing Past Performance Can Transfer
 - B. Recognizing the Ability to Develop
- III. Pride Problems
 - A. The Problem of Amnesia
 - B. The Need for Humility and Service

Scripture Readings:

- 2 Corinthians 4
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-7

Charles has been an active church member since he came to know the Lord during a period of serious marital conflict thirty years ago. Their pastor counseled with Charles and Sue for several months during which time they both learned to understand a godly approach to marriage and communication. They have been good examples and counselors to other young couples for many years.

Recently Charles approached his pastor to indicate that he no longer desired to teach a married couples Sunday school class or to continue other leadership responsibilities. He shared with the pastor that the difficulty with his hearing had grown worse and interfered with his performance.

As they talked it became evident that Charles had been frustrated for some time. He had concluded that the only solution was withdrawing from ministry.

John was asked to serve as the coordinator of the new building fund drive. John had always been willing to serve as a project man for the session or pastor. His work required him to travel extensively. "Projects are something I can do by myself and my travel gives me a wide exposure with fresh ideas from other parts of the country which I can bring to bear on our problems in my reports," John was known to say with great satisfaction. His experience at church had always been the "delightful side of being a Christian," commented Mary, his wife.

John was qualified for the new assignment both by his job experience and his spiritual track record. Having retired two months earlier, John gladly accepted the challenge and looked forward to working closely with the others on the committee. Now, after three months of struggling with two deacons "who are always negative, short-sighted and have no faith at all in money matters," John says, "I am resigning, Pastor. I'm too old to put up with this kind of hassle. I've fought these kinds of people-problems for forty-five years in business. I don't need it in the church."

In this chapter we will look at three older men in Hebrew history. Each faced a particular kind of problem which God confronted in his life. These are common problems which frequently are observed in the lives of older adults. Let's see how the Lord wants us to face such challenges.

Physical Problems

Moses experienced each of the type of problems under consideration today. However, in this lesson it is only his physical problem which shall be the subject of discussion.

Moses is about eighty years old when, while tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the burning bush (Ex. 3:5). The Lord begins this encounter with a warning that Moses is on holy ground. He continues by identifying himself (3:6) and appraising Moses of His intent to free Israel (3:7). Following this awesome opener, God simply tells Moses, "So now, go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people...out of Egypt" (3:10).

Though it seems incredible, Moses responds with a series of questions and reasons as to why God should not send him to free Israel. In 3:11 the question is, "Who am I?" Moses missed the implication of the commission in light of who it was that was giving it. If the president of the United States should give an order to a private in the Army of the United States, that private is empowered to carry out that commission not by virtue of his own personage (rank), but by the personage and rank of him who gave the commission. If God calls a man to do a job, who the man is is not important. His gifts and abilities, his education and experience may be useful, but they are not the determining factor. God's people should never forget that a shoe salesman, D. L. Moody, with no formal education for ministry became the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century.

Moses' second question was, "What is your name?" (3:13). This was an unnecessary question since the Lord had already identified himself (3:6). If Moses needed a name beyond "I am the God of your fathers,"

the Lord would have already given it to him. In actuality when God answers Moses, tell them “I am has sent you,” he only puts in verbal form what He had already implied.

Moses’ third question may reflect a lack of faith. If God had sent him and assured him of success (3:15-22), then surely Israel’s believing him was God’s problem, not his. However, the flow of the text seems to indicate that Moses was seeking to be equipped for a likely contingency. The Lord responds by demonstrating the supernatural enhancements with which He was endowing Moses (4:1-9).

It is Moses’ next question which angers the Lord. What is different about this question? Perhaps its formulation as a statement is what sparks God’s anger. It seems to say, “Here is something you don’t have answer to or a problem you have not thought of.” Such thinking or assumption shows lack of faith and confidence in God (4:10). After answering each of Moses’ previous questions patiently, instructing and assuring him, God is displeased with this question. Most major commentators agree that Moses was afflicted with a speech impediment—a physical weakness. The Lord points out to Moses that He is Creator God and, therefore, completely in charge of this problem. But to assure Moses, God also promises an assistant speaker (4:11-17.)

As we age, we develop physical problems which can impair our service. However, sometimes the Lord shows himself the Creator in control of our problem and provides healing (directly or indirectly through medicine) and relieves us of our problem. Sometimes we need to look for our Aaron whom God may supply. What is imperative is that we neither lose faith in the God who has commissioned us, nor make the assumption that He is not able to enable us to carry out His commission. (1)

Performance Problems

In the business world, employees commonly experience a yearly performance review. In the new Testament Christians are called upon to do frequent spiritual performance reviews. For example, Paul challenges participants of the Lord’s Table to do a spiritual performance review before partaking of the elements of this sacrament. Performance problems are common to all Christians, but in Genesis 17 and 18 Moses records a particular performance problem for Christians of advancing years.

Abraham, the Scripture says, “Believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:6). He is held up to be the model of performance with respect to faith. And yet, he had a problem with Christian performance in the area of faith. Could God do the impossible with him which God was promising? Abraham had faith (Gen. 15:6) that God would somehow give him an heir from his own body, but when it came to believing God very specifically some years later (at age 100) that He would give him a son with his wife Sarah (age 90) Abraham had a performance problem. He “fell upon his face and laughed” (Gen. 17:17).

Sarah followed Abraham’s example when sometime later the three angels appeared at their tent and reaffirmed God’s promise of a son. In

Genesis 18:12 it is recorded that Sarah laughed to herself at the suggestion that she should enjoy her husband at her advanced age and become pregnant.

Performance problems with respect to specific faith demands is very common as Christians grow older. They do not have difficulty believing God for salvation or even the supply of worldly needs, but in specific areas in which they perceive the aging process to be a problem, "laughter" replaces faith.

James had had good "performance reviews" since conversion at age twenty. Within three months he had absorbed the catechism instruction by his faithful pastor, and he accepted the challenge to be an assistant teacher in the Youth Department. After graduation from college, he took his engineering degree to Detroit and rode the post-war auto wave to the top ranks retiring as a chief engineer. During all these years of success, James continued to perform in his personal Christian life and in his Christian service. He was known as a ruling elder who spent much time ministering to people. He had had little taste for long session meetings which he was known to refer to as "much ado about nothing."

Three months after retirement James was approached by his pastor and a much younger session member who had long admired James and unconsciously modeled his approach to being an elder after James' example. Over breakfast they confided in James their desire to propose to the session the planting of a daughter church.

"The men will not buy our idea at this time if it includes hiring another minister. We have, however, as you know, been blessed with sufficient growth this year to reach the 80 percent saturation point of our facilities—and they are only a year and a half old. We thank God for the great opportunity He has given to us, but along with the people blessing He has not to date given us the financial blessing to liquidate our debt. To acquire more property and build again is not possible," concluded Pastor Jones.

"That's right," continued Frank, "but I have contacted the Seventh Day Adventist Church—you know the fairly new plant out on Lee Road just beyond my house—they have not only agreed to rent their facility on Sunday but have offered us Tuesday or Thursday evening also. And, all of this for \$100.00 a month plus a utility charge to be determined by the increase of their bill by our use. With Pastor Jones' permission I have confidentially talked with ten of our young couples, who live out our way, and three older couples, who are willing to give three years to us so that we have some maturity in our group, about the possibility of planting another congregation as a part of our church's extension. The excitement was unexpected by both Pastor and me."

"James, Frank and I have prayed for several weeks about this matter. On Monday I mentioned to him that your name kept coming to my mind each time I prayed. He said he was not surprised because he was having the same experience. I know, James, that you can hold your own in most any theological discussion with any seminary graduate. You have spent, what? five, five week stints studying with R. C. Sproul. You've been to Pensacola Institute on a number of occasions. I've seen you reading church growth books and you've been most helpful to me in teaching these principles to our

people. You've preached regularly in my absence—you almost threatened me when I had to take those six weeks off for surgery and you preached that series on forgiveness so well.

"James, we would like to take a plan to the session to initiate another congregation. We'd like to list the thirteen families committed to the project and we'd like to present you to the session as the elder, lay minister, to carry out the ministry. We would also like to recommend the title, Minister of Church Planting, with a full staff role. We would have in view recommending you for ordination by special exception after one year. The only catch is that there is no money in the budget from which we can recommend a salary at this time. There would be sufficient money in the general budget to recommend leasing a car for you and covering your other auto expenses. We are trusting that the Lord has provided sufficiently for your present needs through your pension and Social Security."

James expressed his surprise but agreed to pray about it. As he drove home from the meeting, he laughed to himself and thought, "After a life time engineering cars, these guys want me to become a people person and a salesman." (2)

Pride Problems

The third problem which seems to be prevalent among Christians of advancing years is pride. Somehow older Christians who have received great blessings materially, spiritually and physically tend to forget the source of their good "fortune" and become presumptive of their blessings. There are two kings of Judah who are instructive to us at this point. (3)

In 2 Chronicles 26 is recorded the ascension of Uzziah at the age of sixteen to the throne of Israel. In verse four the wonderful commentary on this man's life is, ". . . he did right in the sight of the Lord." From verse 5 through verse 15 the writer records his many accomplishments which were the results of "as long as he sought the Lord, God prospered him" (v. 6 NASV). However, he lost sight of the fact that his success was from the Lord and it is recorded, "But when he became strong his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly" (v. 16). His action of corruption was to invade the priestly role and attempt to burn incense in the temple (v. 16).

Some years later Uzziah's great, great grandson, Hezekiah, followed his example (2 Chron. 32). Sennacherib, King of Assyria, had Judah under siege including Jerusalem. In verse 20 he recounts that Hezekiah was joined by Isaiah in prayer. God's response was to dispatch an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army (v. 21). As a result of this blessing, Hezekiah was honored by other nations for the defeat of Assyria. And he took the credit (v. 23).

Unfortunately, his pride was a heart attitude (v. 25). Even his personal experience of God's healing of him and giving him fifteen more years of life did not heal his attitude problem. According to the Scriptures (2 Chron. 32:31), the Lord allowed the visit of the envoys from Babylon (2 Kings 20:12-21) to test him and reveal his heart attitude. He did repent at this point, but his attitude had already set in motion circumstances that would result in the fall of Jerusalem after his death (2 Kings 20:16-21).

The book of Proverbs gives this warning: "Pride goeth before a fall" (Prov. 18:18). It is easy for aging adults in this American society where we drive our vacation home from one national park to another, board a plane for Scotland or Hawaii or purchase a new Honda Accord with our retirement bonus to forget the source of our success and fail to give God the credit and praise. It is easy to forget that the Lord has endowed us with a good mind, provided us a society structured around moral qualities which have enhanced our opportunities for success, provided the personal network of people who have contributed to our promotions; and has led in decisions which have produced personal growth and development. In short, it is easy to develop a prideful attitude about who one is and what one has acquired.

Such pride requires repentance. Such pride should drive us to our knees to entreat our Lord to mitigate the results on our children and grandchildren. The recognition of such pride should humble us and encourage us to devise ways to enable us to maintain a humble attitude always giving our God credit for the successes of life. (4)

WEARINESS IN WELL DOING: A STUDY IN OVERCOMING

Teaching Aids

Introduction:

Assuming the class has read the chapter for this week, consider the three problems separately. For each problem draw out of the class the major points of the discussion in the chapter. Comment on these and allow for discussion, keeping your time frame in mind. At the end of the study of each problem are several stimulating questions. These can be used as a class exercise, in small groups (each group taking one question or each group working with each question), or as assignments given the week ahead so that each person comes to class ready to respond and contribute to the lesson.

If the class has not read the chapter, be prepared to present the three problems and summarize the commentary in the chapter. Then proceed with the study questions at the end of each "problem" subject.

(1) Five minutes - Divide class into three groups with each group addressing one question. Use four minutes to work and one minute to get summary from each group. Keep a record of suggestions so class can act upon them.

Group Discussion:

1. How are some ways we can legitimately determine that a certain type of service is beyond our present capacities? —when, for example, our skills are not equal to the task. You cannot be a typist for the pastor's book project if you cannot type, but you may be a proofreader.
2. What are some ways that Charles could extend his service? (How might the Lord provide him an "Aaron?")
3. How can we be careful not to let fear, frustration or self-effacement keep us from serving as we grow older?

(2) Three to five minutes - Discussion time for class:

1. Anticipate James' objections. What specifically might he say?
2. Formulate an answer for Pastor Jones and Frank from the story of Abraham and Sarah to encourage him around his spiritual performance problem as you anticipate his objections at their next meeting. (Draw upon the account of Genesis 17 and 18 to show him that God could use him to birth a church even though he sees himself as barren.)

(3) Two Minutes - Hand out 2" x 2" red cards to the class. Have each member privately list one or more ways that he or she has struggled with pride. You might suggest three examples: 1) Overly concerned for my appearance; 2) Frequently talk of my accomplishments without giving the Lord the credit for them or for the gifts to achieve them; 3) Bragging about children's accomplishments. Have them tuck the card in their pocket or purse until the end of the class. At the close of class, ask

them to take out the card and write on the other side of it what course of action they need to take to rectify this problem.

(4) Ten Minutes -

1. Have the class list at least five ways that aging adults in our culture might become prideful.
2. Divide the class into two groups. Have one group take each item from the list and:
 - (a) decide how a person with this pride problem might repent. (Remember, repentance means to change one's mind and as a result, one's behavior),
 - (b) have the second group discuss what effects these items
 - (1) will have upon the church and its future generations.
 - (2) how will repentance upon the part of individuals benefit the church.
 - (c) Have the class list some ways in which this problem of pride hinders older adults from serving in the church.
Some examples might be:
 - (1) Spend too much time and energy enjoying the fruit of their blessings (since they have earned them).
 - (2) Spend too much time and energy worrying about their blessing (managing stocks, buying and selling real estate).
 - (3) Resting in the fact that they have done their part and now it is time to enjoy the fruits of their labors (taken to extreme or to exclusion of service).

Chapter 7

INTERGENERATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCY

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help the student recognize the biblical basis for intergenerational interdependency.
2. To help the student explore ways of becoming involved in intergenerational activity.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Old Testament Example of Intergenerational Activity.
- II. New Testament Example of Intergenerational Activity.
- III. Some Functional Examples of Intergenerational Activity.
- IV. Making Intergenerationalism Function Today.

Scripture Readings:

Titus 2

Deuteronomy 6:4-11

Deuteronomy 4:9

A Bible study in the Old Testament of the phrases “little ones” and “the people” suggests very strongly that God viewed Israel as a corporate unity. There was intergenerational responsibility, education, blessing (Deut. 27-28), and judgment (Num. 16:26-32). The study of ancient Jewish culture leaves little doubt that males at age twelve were charged with adult responsibility. The Deuteronomy 27 passage implies clearly that children shared in the instruction of the nation (27:1).

The scene might be more appreciated by us if we envision Moses and the elders teaching a giant Sunday school class. Each class is comprised of hundreds of family units. Father, mother and children for several generations gathered in a common class. The subject of the lesson is God’s commands and the appending blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience respectively. It would do the text no harm to suppose—in fact, it may do harm to the text not to suppose—that these families gathered around the table at the next meal and discussed the “lesson” in detail. Surely children had questions, those simple penetrating questions uninhibited by adult “sophistication,” and adults expressed their fear, concern, surprise, confusion and speculation of God’s blessings to come. We should further suppose that those simple questions of children precipitated soul searching on behalf of the adults. The adult responses in turn would generate serious reflection on the part of the children. Here, then, is intergenerational Christian education at its best.

There can be little question that the institution and celebration of

the Passover provided a wonderful intergenerational experience for Israel. On the night of the Exodus, the night of the institution of the Passover, Moses led approximately three million people out of Egypt. Though we are to understand that all Israeli families participated in the Passover, we should not think that everyone fully understood its meaning. As that saving ritual was enacted, there were many questions around the table. I would suppose that parents and grandparents were stimulated to explore the Passover's fuller meaning by the questions of the children. Children when allowed to participate in "adult" conversations are often the "teachers" of the adults.

Carol LeAnn, age twelve, turned to her father on the way home from a Sunday communion service. "Daddy," she asked, "isn't communion like Jewish Passover?"

"Well, I guess I'm not sure," replied her father.

John, Carol LeAnn's maternal grandfather, chimed into the conversation. "Yes, it is. The Passover looked forward to the coming of the lamb of God who is our Lord Jesus Christ. Our communion service looks back to Him and His death on the cross for us just like the lamb's death and sprinkling of His blood saved the first born of each Jewish family who by faith sacrificed the lamb."

"Well, just what do you mean?" asked Carol LeAnn's father.

"I think, Daddy, that the Passover became a reminder to the nation of Israel that the blood of a perfect lamb was shed for their deliverance. The communion reminds us that Jesus' blood was shed for us."

"Say, that is pretty good theology, young lady," responded her grandfather. "You are giving your daddy some right smart instruction."

That similar scenes occurred around the Old Testament Passover table is certain. There were many who understood very little about the Passover process especially after its practice had become passe. When the celebration was recovered, there was ample occasion for intergenerational learning.

Another example of intergenerational interdependency can be seen in the account of Paul, Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). Paul had taken John Mark on a missionary expedition. For an unstated reason, John Mark left the company of Paul and returned home. On a later occasion Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on another endeavor. Paul refused. Their differences became so strong that Paul took Silas and departed in one direction and Barnabas took John Mark and departed in another direction. Barnabas' name means "encourager." He lived out the meaning of his name in relation to young John Mark who was probably a generation younger than Barnabas. The success of intergenerational interdependency — John Mark was dependent upon Barnabas to argue his case, defend him and "put his mouth where his money was;" Barnabas was dependent upon John Mark to be teachable and become dependable — was John Mark's Christian maturity as seen in Paul's later admission that he had become beneficial to him.

Here is a great opportunity for older adults who have more time and less demands upon them. There are many younger people who can profit

from a calm firm hand, a steady understanding voice and a mature ability to make judgments (and to teach process of coming to those judgments). It takes some time to win the young person's confidence, but when his willingness to listen has been won, the influence which can be exercised is almost limitless. (1)

Joseph provides an instructive study of intergenerational interdependency. Having overcome, by the grace of God, the evil of his brothers, Joseph became the teacher of his brothers and the caretaker of his father. In fact, his whole family became dependent upon his mercy (Gen. 47:1-11). In the process he also became their instructor, teaching them respect for authority, the practice of mercy (Gen. 45:1-5), and the character of God (Gen. 45:6-8).

Stop reading for a few minutes and try this project. List some situations in which people in our society can express; and how they can profitably experience intergenerational interdependency. For example:

1. When older adults have a divorced child with small children these parents may assist in the rearing of these children. This is the actual situation quite frequently, but the question is, "How intergenerational is this process that actually goes on?" Sometimes it is a babysitting service that is as impersonal as paid help. How can this be turned into an intergenerational interdependent experience?
2. Grandchildren can help with the home upkeep and care of grandparents' home. Children of the church can aid older adults in the church with same tasks.
3. A well-traveled, self-taught senior adult (my father-in-law, for example, has acquired a knowledge of the history of Scotland equivalent to that of a college professor) may augment the high school instructor, the upper-grade school or middle-school teacher with the teaching of this segment of their class.
4. A senior adult couple who have lived through one of life's tragedies—death of a child, a crippled child, or the loss of a fortune, for example—may be used to teach effectively a high school or college class for several weeks. They lead the class through the experience, how it affected them, how they learned to deal with it, what lesson God taught them and the perspective that time has given them both on the situation and the way they dealt with it. (2)

When a baptism is administered in the Presbyterian Church in America, the *Book of Church Order* prescribes that the congregation be challenged to take a vow of assistance. Listen to what the congregation pledges to perform:

"Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?"

Here is a significant solemn vow which is intergenerational. The age complexity of the entire congregation should be kept in view. In most cases, upper bracket teens through the senior adults are present. Each makes a vow to assist the presenting parents in the awesome task of parenting. (3)

In reality, the nomenclature of this chapter does not introduce a unique concept to the Christian life. Intergenerational interdependency is simply a definitive term to refocus our attention to the biblical picture of the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 the Apostle Paul has taught the Christian church that believers are interdependent as are the members of the physical body. Each member has a unique set of functions/abilities to benefit the body. No one in the body can therefore play down his own role/function nor that of another individual. Paul's illustration places no age limits on the functions of individuals within the church. By its context and definition the church is intergenerational in nature. This chapter has simply cast this ageless truth of God's creative order in contemporary terminology. Let the Holy Spirit illumine your mind and challenge your heart afresh. Work at making the application practical. If left to our own human devices, we tend to become generationally ingrown (Sunday school classes which are age graded and perpetual lead to such ingrownness, for example, and an independent spirit (until life contingencies force us to become dependent upon another generation) shields us from experiencing the interdependence which God intended to be a part of our Christian experience.

How can we make this intergenerational interdependence a more functional reality in today's church? How can senior adults interface with middle-aged adults, younger adults, teens and children? Answering these questions could probably make a good group exercise. To prime your thinking here are a few situations which have provided such "intergenerationalism."

One church developed a summer day camp program. Unlike most such operations, this church staffed from within itself. The director was a middle-aged lady and her co-director was an older young adult. The staff was incremental in utilizing college age, senior high and junior high students. All were paid staff. This raised the value of the positions and put everyone in the role of being a "real" staff person regardless of age. The staff also included several older folks who, while volunteers, functioned as paid staff. What a great team! There was a true interdependency. There was growth and learning between all members of the staff.

A similar scene took place in a VBS program some years ago. For reasons long forgotten, but no doubt very common, our church was short of adult volunteers. High school and junior high students as well as several senior adults were recruited. It was a great experience with over 500 children enrolled. The highlight of the week was an older man who was the roving storyteller. Several teenage boys expressed the extent of the impact this gentleman had upon them during the week. The storyteller shared how he had been spiritually and personally refreshed through his ministry to the children.

While serving on the staff of a large church I wrote a stage adaptation of "The Light and The Glory" and produced it for President's Day weekend. One of the great joys was working with ages high school through senior adults. To watch the chemistry between these various ages was exciting.

The Christian education flyer from one church included the following intergenerational Sunday school class:

“Pairs and Spares: Teens to retired, with and without children and grandchildren! A diverse group of people, actively participating in class, learning from each other. Bible study and daily living is emphasized. This class participates in service projects. Occasional social activities are planned.”

So how can the church generate the enrichment that comes from intergenerational interdependence? By having philosophy that is intergeneral in commitment, by actively recruiting people to participate with those of various ages in small fellowship groupings and through individuals like you promoting such a concept by your own manner of life.

INTERGENERATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCY

Teaching Aids

(1) (Five to seven minutes) Ask the group to read Acts 15:36-41. Then discuss why John Mark was willing to go with Barnabas. Here are some possibilities.

1. He had had a change of heart.
2. Barnabas had encouraged him toward his change of heart.
3. Barnabas had sought him out after the completion of the missionary trip with Paul.
4. Barnabas was willing to risk his relationship with Paul for his sake.

Elicit a discussion:

1. As to whom and how they might win a young person's confidence who has been frustrated along life's journey.
2. As to how they might encourage, transmit wisdom and knowledge (experience and book-learning) to this young person.

(2) (Five minutes - after five minutes it may seem wise to appoint a committee to complete such a project)

1. Decide upon an older adult whom this class can either help or facilitate a younger person to help:
 - a. learn how to use a computer.
 - b. take responsibility for personal safety
(i.e. the importance of locking doors and windows at night and the setting of a routine that will help a failing memory to remember to do so.)
 - c. Other aids which this class sees as necessary.
2. Decide upon youth in the church or community for whom this class will pray, and with whom it will corporately work to build a relationship so that one or more members can effectively teach these young people how to live more successfully.

(3) (Ten minutes) Divide the class into groups of five (or if a small class you may want to work as a group). List at least ten ways in which intergenerational interdependence can be exercised by various aged members of the congregation in assisting parents in child rearing. Choose three of these and devise a class plan of action (perception of needs and your imagination are the only barriers) to implement them in your church.

What we can do. — goal

How we can do it. — action plan

When will we do it? — objectives

Who will report? — debriefing (which leads to plan revision and refinement before further implementation)

Chapter 8

CAREGIVING AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help student recognize the responsibility to aid in the care of senior adults.
2. To help student recognize that such caring is a channel of blessing to those who care as well as to those to whom care is given.

Lesson Outline:

- I. The Ultimate Need for All of Us to be Recipients of Care.
- II. The Family Loss From Premature Institutionalization.
- III. The Alternatives for Caring.
- IV. The Role of Prime-Timers in Providing Care.
- V. The Task of Caregiving is Sometimes Enormous.

Scripture Reading:

Genesis 47-50

It is a biblical reality that all mankind will age. The mind, the body and the emotional structure deteriorates (review the aging process of King David, the man "after God's own heart," 1 Kings 1:1-2:1). We begin life needing the caregiving of a loving tender mother and a strong loving father to provide for the development of our minds, the feeding and grooming of our bodies and the caressing of our emotional selves. At seventy or eighty we need love no less than we did in early childhood. (1) As we reach toward the extremity of life the caregiving dependency on others progressively returns. We shall need the assistance of someone younger to compensate for our deteriorating minds and our ill functioning bodies. And, we shall need emotional affirmation no less than we did as children.

The closing years of Jacob's and Joseph's lives provide some gerontological insights. In particular they reflect caregiving at an intergenerational level. In Genesis 45:9-11 we read Joseph's instructions to his brothers after their emotional reunion in Egypt.

"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you. . . .'"

Though Jacob proclaimed his readiness for death after his reunion with Joseph, the Lord gave him seventeen more years of life. He lived

these years of frailty with his extended family who provided care for him. As evidenced in Genesis 47:27-31, he continued to play a vital part in family structure even at the point of being sick unto death. Chapters 48 and 49 record very important family interactions. Jacob, exercising his cultural role as patriarch, provided structure to his family to insure peaceful relationships after his death.

In Genesis 50:17-21, Joseph's brothers approach him subsequent to his father's death out of their guilt and the fear it produced. Now that their father was dead, Joseph's retribution for their treatment of him becomes a distinct possibility. But Joseph assures them that he sees the past in God's providence. He then promises them that "I will provide for you and your little ones" (v. 21). If you remember, Joseph was the youngest son of Jacob. While exact chronology is difficult, Joseph was probably in his nineties when his father died. His brothers all being older than he, Joseph was promising necessary caregiving. Until his death at 110, his family was very much involved in his life and he in theirs as is seen in Genesis 50:23.

While the major intent of this biblical material is not to instruct us regarding the caregiving process of older adults, it certainly reflects how these godly families, with all their foibles, cared for their aging members. When it is remembered that this large extended family was also the community of God, the examples become instructive to the church as a community as well.

The need for this instruction is imperative. The numbers of us who will live sufficiently long enough to return to the care receiving stage is rapidly increasing. The prospective impact of these numbers is stunning Americans who study trends. Even the popular press is sounding a warning note.

"Right now, one in eight Americans is sixty-five or over. By 2030, almost one in five will be sixty-five. People eighty-five and over are one of the fastest growing age groups" (*Wall Street Journal* 12/9/86).

Our culture has responded by creating institutions to provide for the basic needs of the infirmed. Until recently the caregiving responsibility has been delegated far too frequently to in-house professional services. But these institutions, while solving—at least that is the intent—the problem of bodily needs, frequently provide for the mind and emotional needs sparingly. It is a heartwrenching affair to see a person with minimal needs institutionalized thereby losing his freedom of choice, the familiar surroundings of his home and the emotional support of his family, friends, and church structure only to be left with a void.

The alarming fact is that the large majority of Americans being consigned to nursing homes is unnecessary or at least premature. One senior adult care specialist observed that his years of experience caused him to question 50 percent of the nursing home placements at the time they were made. The majority of these could have been postponed at least six months. While speculating a guess would not be wise, it certainly seems likely that a number of the 50 percent would have never seen the inside of the nursing home had the placement been postponed.

If personal care assistance would have been available, many of these families could have provided the care needed. Unfortunately, such an

alternative is frequently not provided in the community or through the church. When the only alternative for the family is nursing home placement, the senior adult, the family and the church suffers the consequences.

The family prematurely loses the benefits of the normal family interaction. Children are no longer free to play games with the grandparent. Family meals and occasions have an empty place. The normal process of relationships is disturbed. The senior adult member must transition to another phase of life before the actual demands of his condition dictate it. This phase includes the loss of his regular family support. Having the night nurse, who is doing her job, adjust the pillow is quite different than having a loving daughter adjust the same pillow. The church also suffers loss. Mary Sue's bright face is missing from her regular pew. The children miss her attention. Her godly prayers, which encouraged everyone in prayer meeting, are sorely missed. When the transition to the nursing home is necessary, the nursing home becomes a blessing to all. But when it is premature it yields a loss to all.

The benefits of life are always the result of the investment of ourselves. Even God's blessings flow through obedience—ours or another's. This principle does not change when it comes to caring for senior adults. Much of the care for senior adults is provided by the children who at the same time are often caring for their own children or have returned to the work place to produce income for college expenses. The requirements of elderly parents can grow by almost geometric proportions generating unbelievable burdens and exacting enormous tolls on the caregivers. Most of these caregivers are women. They exhaust time and energy caring for aged parents which husband and family desire and need. When these contingencies are short-term, the family grows by the "stretching experience" which teaches patience (Jas. 1:2-5) and cooperation. But when the short-term becomes the norm, the family reserves are constantly under pressure. While the Christian family can endure through the enabling hand of God, the quality of life enjoyed is diminished. (2)

The church which takes its responsibility seriously suffers exhausting demands. The overload on staff and volunteer labor leads to individual burnout as the church tries to minister to an ever increasing constituency of frail elderly. Metropolitan churches cover a large geographical area. When these churches are located in the city, they frequently have a large population of elderly who live close to the church. However, the younger individuals who are the volunteer staff often live in the suburbs. The driving distances and the commuting time to provide a basic ministry to these older adults becomes prohibitive. In the process the church suffers the loss of being able to minister to these individuals.

Jesus Christ cares about His hurting people. He said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren (and if you have visited some nursing homes or seen some of the elderly street people in major cities, you have seen just how 'least' some of these individuals are), you have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). It is important for us to be imitators of our Lord Jesus Christ in caring for the needy.

What are the alternatives available to us to care? One of the choices

for us is through personal care assistance. This is a subject that will be discussed at length in another chapter. Here it simply needs to be mentioned so that it can be seen as a way of postponing the nursing home necessity.

Another alternative is to not leave all the caregiving of the nursing home residents to the professional staff. Families need to see the nursing home as a place that does for them what they cannot do, not a place that does all they do not want to do. Placing our frail, or not so frail, relative in the nursing home does not absolve us of responsibility for their mental and emotional needs. When the family must move toward the nursing home in order to meet the care needs of a relative, it should see the nursing home as an augmentation of itself. The staff should be seen as part of the family team playing the positions the family cannot play. (3)

Still another alternative is similar to the last. Just as the family is not free of responsibility for the well being of the nursing home resident, so the church is not. The church, that is the individuals who are members of the church, should have an organized methodology for providing ministry to their members in nursing homes. But remember, we are not only to minister to our own, but to the community. Therefore, every church should seek to have a ministry to nursing home residents.

In many instances, the people most able to provide such ministry are those who themselves are Prime-Timers (senior adults). This is also an excellent ministry to cross pollinate older adults and teenagers. (4) Together they can provide a unique ministry which enriches the nursing home resident, the older adult and the teenager. You may have heard that the heart grows colder to spiritual matters as people grow older. Don't you believe it. This is especially not true in the nursing home where in a short time many have had to reduce life accomplishments to three drawers and a three-foot closet. The fleeting value of the temporal sets in rather quickly and eternal verities take on renewed potential. There are many who are indeed "white unto harvest."

Caregiving is a necessity for a dying humanity. Caregiving is a Christian virtue. Caregiving takes all of the Christian graces and many times receives little in return. Even the satisfaction of serving is sometimes overshadowed by the enormous drain incurred and is also realized when the task is completed. Caregiving to the older adult is going to be an increasing demand on the Christian community for generations to come. Only an aggressive posture will help the church and the individual meet the challenge. (5)

CAREGIVING AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Teaching Aids

Introduction:

The following outline may be used to develop the biblical order for caregiving. Though a number of these texts refer to financial care, the principle is applicable to other needs. If you use this outline, allot about ten to twelve minutes to develop it.

- I. Each individual is responsible to provide for himself (1 Thess. 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:11-12).
- II. Each individual is responsible to provide for the members of his household (1 Tim. 5:8).
- III. Families are responsible to provide for family members (1 Tim. 5:16).
- IV. The church is responsible to provide for its own widows (1 Tim. 5:9-10) and poor (1 Cor. 9).
- V. All men everywhere are to help those in need (the various teachings of Jesus about caring for the poor and the example of the Old Testament laws).

(1) A review of the twelve major New Testament commands to "one another" each other would set a good tone for this class. Here they are (no more than fifteen minutes):

Romans 12:10	"Be devoted to one another"
Romans 12:10	"Honor one another"
Romans 15:5	"Be of the same mind with one another"
Romans 15:17	"Accept one another"
Romans 15:14	"Admonish one another"
Galatians 6:2	"Bear one another's burdens"
Ephesians 4:2	"Bear with one another"
Ephesians 5:21	"Submit to one another"
1 Thessalonians 5:11	"Encourage one another"

(2) Take a poll of the class. How many have extended family or friends who are caring for, or who are being cared for, by family? How many know families where the strain of caring became too great, or the capacity for caring was insufficient so that caregiving had to be transferred to an institution? (two minutes)

Taking this poll can help everyone feel more at ease with the subject. In seminars where such polling was done, the atmosphere of sharing and growing was enhanced.

(3) Contact a nursing home and make arrangements to interview the social worker or director. Explain that you are teaching this course at your church and that the Teacher's Guide suggested such an interview. State that you would like to record the interview to play in your class

and that you would appreciate ten minutes of his time. Indicate that the subject of the interview is to be the role of the family in caring for the nursing home resident. Ask about the Family Council. (ten minutes)

(4) Senior adults and teens make a good ministry team for the nursing home. The senior adult provides security for the teen in a strange environment and the teen provides vigor and hope. Ask your youth director to recruit two teens and you recruit two members of the class. Contact a chaplain or social worker and explain your project. Volunteer for your teams to visit consistently for three months, once a week, or an hour at a time. This provides a terminus for the older adult, parameters for the team and a dependable structure for the chaplain or social worker.

Have the class become involved in the project. Discuss what kind of projects they could enlist some teens to engage in with them. (Don't forget, thirteen and fourteen years olds are teens and are sometimes more willing than older teens to try something new.) Some projects could be: Teaching computer skills to an older adult, helping with a ceramics class project, reading a book to a blind person, etc.

You may want to appoint a committee to develop an action plan and bring it back to the class to implement.

(5) You may want to take ten minutes to close the session in prayer. List on the blackboard families in your church who are caregivers, members in nursing homes and senior adults who are having a difficult time maintaining themselves in an independent living situation. Now pray for these specific folks. (ten minutes)

If you cannot list any, make it an assignment for class members to come back with one individual to pray for next week.

Chapter 9

ENDOWED WITH DIGNITY

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help student appreciate human dignity as a gift from God.
2. To help student understand the relationship between dignity and self-care.
3. To help student become aware of the various living arrangements available to senior adults.

Lesson Outline:

- I. God Endows With Dignity.
 - A. Created in the Image of God.
 - B. Assigned Creative Role.
 - C. Assigned Cultural Mandate.
- II. God Protects Dignity.
- III. God Directs Dignity.
- IV. Dignity Observed in the Bible.
 - A. Old Testament Patriarchs.
 - B. New Testament Directives.
- V. Relationship of Dignity and Housing.
 - A. Dignity Enhanced by Choice.
 - B. Dignity at Every Level of Housing.
 - C. The Church's Role in Housing Choices.

Scripture Readings:

Genesis 1:26-31
Ephesians 4:25-32
1 Timothy 5:1-20

In my ninth grade biology class, thirty-five years ago, our teacher displayed good teaching technique when he gave an excited affirmation to a classmate who had observed, "You mean that man is an animal and that is why he is at the top of the taxonomic chart?" To his

affirmation the student replied, "Well, maybe you are an animal, but I'm not."

Christianity sees man and animals as qualitatively different. While biologically there are many similarities of design, man is uniquely created in the image of God. It is the *imago Dio* which gives man dignity. Observe this basis of dignity from the Word of God. (I will use the words *dignity*, *honor* and *respect* synonymously in this chapter.)

God Endows with Dignity

The book of beginnings records God's decision to create man (Gen. 1:26-31). The endowment with dignity actually has three aspects to it. First and foremost, man was created in God's image. Being created in God's image set man apart from all creatures. Being God-like man was endowed with dignity in his very existence.

As a consequence of man's creation in the image of God, he was given two assignments which also set him apart from the rest of creation and contributed to his endowment with dignity. Man was given the ability and responsibility to enter into God's creative work. "Be fruitful and multiply" implies both ability and responsibility to create new image-bearers by the reproductive process.

The third aspect of dignity is found in man's assigned cultural mandate. Man is given the responsibility to "subdue" and "have dominion" over the earth and all living creatures.

Notice that each of these responsibilities is dependent upon the unique abilities of man which in turn are dependent upon man's unique creation in God's image. In other words, man has dignity, but it is derived dignity. Every human being possesses this honor with which he has been endowed. At one and the same time man is humble before his God and exalted by his God. God has endowed man with dignity and treats man with dignity.

God Protects Dignity

In Genesis 9:6 God established the law of capital punishment. Our task here is not to debate the pros and cons of capital punishment. We want only to observe God's intent to preserve respect of one man in his total being for another man in his total being.

From a simple reading of this passage, it seems clear that God's intent is to protect the image of God. What makes murder inexcusable is that the image bearer of God is destroyed. The very heart of man's dignity is cut out. He no longer can represent God or carry out his God-like functions of creation and dominion. Hence, God establishes the law of capital punishment to protect man's dignity by giving society the responsibility to punish murder and thereby also to deter it.

God Directs Dignity

There are many examples of God teaching man how to preserve the dignity of fellow men. For example, the Old Testament law of gleaning which gave the poor an opportunity to provide for themselves through the work of collecting grain from the fields of the more fortunate (Lev.

19:10; Ruth 2:7). And in the New Testament, it is particularly instructive to observe His direction with reference to the use of the tongue.

There are two New Testament passages which speak with clarity on the issue of the tongue. In Ephesians 4:29-32 the Apostle Paul addresses a number of problems which are expressed through the tongue. Verse 31 gives a list of items to be put off from one's behavior. Each of these refers to interpersonal interactions. Listen to Paul:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. . . ."

However, there is one word which does not fit this pattern in the original language. In the Greek New Testament this is not a neat package referring to interpersonal relationships. The "evil speaking" is actually the word "blaspheme." To blaspheme is to speak evil against God, that is, speaking against the dignity of God. What is Paul's point, then? It is this. When bitterness, anger, wrath, and clamor give way to attacking another human being the attack is actually against God. When one human being attacks the dignity of another human being, he in fact attacks the honor of God.

The Apostle James confirms this position of the Apostle Paul. In the third chapter of his book he says, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude (likeness or image) of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:8-10).

God's directive then is that we treat one another with the respect which he has given to us.

The Dignity of All People and Elderly in Particular is Practiced in the Bible

There can be no doubt that the Scriptures afford honor to all people. God is a respecter of no man and yet He is the respecter of all men because they are created in His own image. From a biblical perspective, human dignity has always been important and the respect of the elderly in particular. While the patriarchal system is looked upon with suspicion by modern culture because the old apparently controlled the family, a look at the system from another vantage point reveals the great dignity with which the old were treated.

The Old Testament story of Joseph's treatment of his malevolent brothers, his bringing of his father to Egypt, his provision for all of them, and the establishing of them in the Land of Goshen is a great example of human dignity. It is also a picture of the patriarchal system at its best. Here is seen the blessing given by Jacob as a guide for the family. Here is seen the patriarch's final request fulfilled—dignity to the grave (Gen. 46-50).

When we turn to the New Testament our information is more limited by way of family examples. But the fifth chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy certainly speaks to human respect. There are at least three instructions for human relationships which emphasize honor for one another in this chapter. These are interpersonal relationships (5:1-

2), treatment of widows (5:3-16), and treatment of the leadership (5:17-20).

Paul chooses the ideal family relationships to instruct us regarding the treatment of all others. He says, in effect, "Think of the very best human examples of filia relationships and let them serve as the standard for all other relationships." Note in particular, an older person is not to be rebuked, but entreated as a father (5:1). Thus, we are to treat all older people with the same dignity we see expressed in the very best example of child-father relationships.

The instruction of the Apostle regarding widows guards their dignity. They are to provide for themselves, to retain their marriageability, to be aided by family, and finally, to be aided by the church. Consider this sequence. It conserves the individual dignity of "create" and "have dominion" as long as is possible. The first line of assistance comes from family where filia love provides a context for caring. And finally, one's dignity is least diminished in the reception of assistance when one's own ability (to subdue and have dominion), or the ability of one's family, have been exhausted. At this point the Christian family has the responsibility of love to care for those unable to care for themselves.

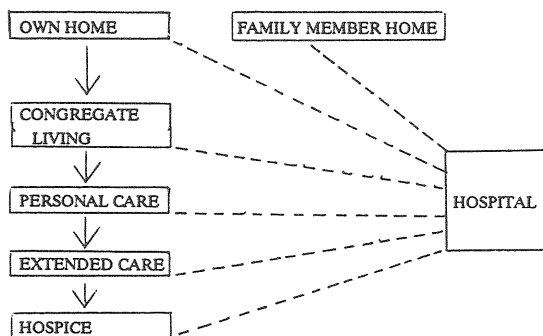
Dignity and Housing for the Elderly

All of the above discussion is important to a Christian view of housing for the elderly. The ability to care for one's self, to provide for one's self and to remain in one's chosen environment impacts one's sense of dignity. Though chapter ten developed the special issue of caring for family members, the imperative consideration of options for housing, and the goal of housing, were not explored.

Nearly every American family for the next fifty years will face these issues at least once. Many will experience the agony (at least for many it will be agony) of interdicting their parents living arrangements only to face the same issues as elderly parents twenty or thirty years later.

What should be the Christian goal in housing for the elderly? How does one best preserve dignity? There is no doubt that there is not unanimity on this matter. But it seems in accord with human dignity that senior adults should have the opportunity of living in the home of their choice for as long as possible.

The following diagram is an attempt to present a flow chart of housing needs for senior citizens.



Orderly progression is not necessarily the norm. Flow charts assume a progressive orderly deterioration. But, an individual may go from his

own home or family member's home to extended care as place of residence.

The understanding of this flow chart is dependent upon some definitions. Let's explore the various terms used in this chart.

Own Home: This term does not exclusively refer to the ownership of the family home, but to the domicile of one's choosing. It may take the form of a home, an apartment, a condominium, or even personal quarters in a congregate living situation.

Family Member: This refers to living in the residence of a family member. This can take the form of an in-law suite with an independent living arrangement, a personal room while sharing other family space, care and supervision within the family lifestyle, or physical care extended to the capacity of the caretakers and the need of the senior adult.

Congregate Living: This is living within a complex dedicated to senior adults. The degree of dependency is progressive. It can vary from simply living in the unit to total nursing care in a total life-care facility. Some congregate living units are simply living quarters which offer no dining facilities or medical support.

Personal Care Unit: This is the next step in dependent care. Typically this living arrangement becomes an option when a person's health has reached the point that he forgets medicines, forgets to turn off the stove and/or to care for personal needs. The individual is no longer up to providing meals for himself, changing linens or cleaning the living area. At this point family care could be very appropriate, but not always possible.

The personal care unit is half way between congregate living and extended care. Personal care is where a person can walk in and out at his own discretion. Some continue to drive a car. A very independent life style is possible, but it is monitored for health and safety reasons.

Extended Care: This is often called the nursing home stage. At this point the individual is no longer able to care for his or her own basic needs. Frequently the individual is bed ridden. Twenty-four hour care is required. The person does not have access to leave. If properly operated, the extended care nursing facility is still a place of dignity. In fact, it should ensure self respect by providing necessary bodily care and providing meaningful activities within the scope of each individual's diminishing abilities.

Hospice Care: Hospice is not so much a place of care but a kind of care. The concept is to care for the whole person (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) at every level of care needed. Hospice care should be our goal. (For further information on hospice care for the elderly write the National Hospice Organization. See list of organizations for address.)

Conclusion:

Dignity is a gift of our Creator. We have no right to take it from one another and we have a responsibility to insure the maintenance of each other's dignity by the way we treat one another. There are few things which disenfranchise someone more quickly than removing the ability to choose one's place of dwelling. Dignity can be extended over a longer period of time by the development of a wider spectrum of housing possibilities. The church, and the denomination in particular, should give serious consideration to expanding available options. Within the current options education regarding choices should be a part of the church's ministry. Developing services, coordinating services, and education concerning services which facilitate senior adults extending their ability to remain in their choice of housing should become a ministry of the denomination and the church.

The Christian Advocate Ministry* is in the process of developing a whole range of services which will facilitate the aging adult to remain in the residence of his choice until physical incapacitation demands a move to the next level of care. At that point CAM will provide assistance in the transition to the next necessary level of care.

* Help with these projects can be obtained from Christian Advocate Ministry through the office of Mercy Ministries at the Mission to North America office of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Chapter 10

HOME, WHERE EXTENDED CARE BEGINS

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help the student consider the reality of home care.
2. To help the student consider the necessary planning for successful home care.
3. To acquaint the student with principles useful in determining when to discontinue home care.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Setting the Stage.
- II. The Necessity of Planning.
 - A. Questions to Ask.
 - B. Preparations Possible.
- III. Principles for Determining Termination of Care.
 - A. Principle One.
 - B. Principle Two.
 - C. Principle Three.

Scripture Readings:

Exodus 20:12

My son was two years old when my parents moved into the in-law suite in our home. My father and mother both found it difficult to leave the parenting to us. My father was a warm, caring man who had a contradictory manner of being negative about most everything. This attitude combined with his regular incursion into the discipline of my children, especially my son, provoked periodic painful experiences for the entire family. These conditions presented my son unwanted opportunities for growth. After five years my mother died. My father now became integrated more closely into our family. His mental capacities diminished rapidly and he was finally diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease.

During all this time, with increasing regularity, my son watched me playing the role of parent to my father. I remember sitting down with him on a number of occasions to explain these dynamics which I knew were confusing to him. Quite often the thoughts of my own aging would haunt me. "Remember, your day is coming." And then that paraphrase

of our Lord's words, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matt. 7:12) would trigger a prayer. "Lord," I would pray, "give me the grace to treat Dad in a way that pleases you. Help me to treat him the way I would want him to treat me. My son is watching me. Help me to be a good example of love to him. Help him to learn how love operates in a tough situation."

There were times I struggled. There was an incident just prior to my father's terminal fall in which the Lord assured me that my overall treatment of him had been a debt of love. It happened one day as I bathed him after a particularly difficult incident. He had one of those lucid moments, characteristic of an Alzheimer's mind, while I was drying his emaciated body. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "Kid," his long-time name of affection for me, "I'd be in an awful fix if it were not for you. Thank you." The blank stare returned to his eyes. I am grateful for that affirmation and that tender moment.

The home of children and sometimes other relatives frequently is, and often should be, the first place of extended care. It is the place of love-bonds. It is a place of familiarity. It is an opportunity for spiritual growth and human maturing. It is the obvious place for the family to exercise its biblical responsibility to care for its own in a warm environment with economic restraint.

Caring for an aging relative in one's home requires planning, preparation and regular staff meetings. The family will be much better providers if they function as a staff. As a staff they will function better if they think and act as such.

Planning is important to the success of any enterprise. Unfortunately, taking on the care of a relative too often just happens. A crisis precipitates action. Some quick preparations may be made, like moving a child and his belongings in with a sibling; but serious planning is overlooked.

What kind of planning is imperative? The breadth of the planning is somewhat contingent upon the circumstances. But here are matters to consider and questions to ask.

1. What will be the long-term effects of this action? What is the length of the anticipated stay? Will the parent be able to return to his/her own residence? Will one member of the family need to terminate employment to provide the care?
2. What will be the short-term effects? How much will family routine be disrupted? Will a college age child need to postpone school for a semester to give assistance? Will children need to give up a bedroom or the family the recreation room?
3. Physical planning. Will a house addition be necessary or desirable? If so, who will finance it? If the parent will finance it, what kind of legal agreement should be used to insure that misunderstandings do not occur? Will modifications to the home be necessary (wheelchair entrance, etc.)? Will it be necessary to purchase another vehicle?
4. Relationship planning. There are three areas of concern in terms of relationships. The first is the marriage of the adult children caregivers. Remember, the marriage is God's basic unit of society.

If it falters, the family falters. A couple will have to think carefully about the additional demands of caregiving. How will they maintain their relationship? How will they gain respite so that there will be time for some church fellowship and fun together? How will they provide for private time? Will the caregivers have sufficient rest time to maintain their energies and composure under stress?

The second area of concern is family life. How can mother and father have time together with the children? What about family outings and vacations? What about family traditions and relationships with the spouse's family?

Relationships with and between the children is the third area of concern. Will the children have to be quiet all the time? Will the children be able to have normal friendships with their friends being able to come into the house? Who will be the parent? (We knew going into our situation that this would be a problem area. It proved to be greater than we had planned. Had our analysis been more accurate certain modifications in the physical structure of our home could have been a useful compensation.) Will the grandparent be willing not to interfere? What effect will a chronically ill grandparent have on the child? How will the possible eventual death of the relative in the home be explained to the children?

5. Another troublesome component of caring for a relative which calls for planning is that of authority. Have the prospective caregivers become sufficiently independent of the parent(s)? That is, have they achieved the biblical mandate to leave their parents and bond to one another? If this question is answered in the negative, the caregiver will have great difficulty maintaining control of his (their) own home. Is the relative of a mind to be cooperative? Or, will this person attempt to manipulate the caregivers and precipitate power struggles?

Some of these questions are unpleasant to raise and even more vexing to face. But if they are not given a credible hearing in the planning stage, they will haunt the hallowed walls of both the caregivers home and mind.

Problems surfaced in this planning stage should not automatically dictate a decision not to care for a relative. Remember, no family can become a caregiving family without facing adjustments. Adjustments bring stress for everyone. But, they also bring opportunity for growth to adults and children alike (Rom. 5:3-6; Jas. 1:2-5). The question is not, "Will there be stress?" but rather, "Is our family capable of handling the level of stress to be generated?" If not, then this family should be looking for God's "way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13).⁽¹⁾ Or, the question may be, "Are there physical or circumstantial limitations which restrict our caring for this person?" If the answer is affirmative, a suitable alternative must be sought.

The preparation phase should produce a prayerfully devised process to mitigate the anticipated difficulties. Each question raised in the planning phase must be answered. An effective approach must be

adopted to address each issue. A written record (it is wise to secure a notebook and entitle it "Our Family Caregiving Plan") and a clear summary of the proceedings is essential for good family follow-through. Once the action plan is produced, preparation is completed by implementing the pre-caregiving matters.

Preparation, for example, includes sitting down with the children to discuss what can be expected. If one must give up a room and the children now share a room, it is important to help them work through this change. This is a good time to teach children about the sacrifice of giving, the cost of discipleship and the giving nature of love (1 Cor. 13:4-8; Jn. 3:16-18). (2)

If modifications to the home are necessary, it is better to work out a short stay in a nursing home for the parent patient during these preparations. Starting the caregiving adventure in a set of circumstances which compounds the stress is not advisable.

Even though there may be circumstantial, economic and social pressures to move quickly without the planning and preparation phases in place, do not. A caregiving experience bathed in prayer, planning and preparation is an exercise in clarity. Confusion and frustration are the product of foolish haste.

Mary has been caring for her 85-year-old mother for three and a half years. She and Mike have managed a one week vacation a year and several one day outings together through a county-sponsored respite service. They have not been able to do any activities together with the children at all. One Saturday a month Mike cares for Rose so that Mary can spend the day with the children. School activities have been a one-only-parent affair since Rose came to live with them.

Recently Mary went to the doctor with chest pains. "Stress" was the doctor's one firm word accompanied by a lecture. Mike reluctantly shared with Mary his own struggles with jealousy over Rose's increasing demands on Mary as well as the demands of her deteriorating body.

The first three years of caring for Rose seemed to work out well. But then Rose's bladder control failed. She became ugly to Mary and the children. She refused to wear a diaper and restricted herself to the bed. Her clear mind became clouded with resentment and her pleasant disposition was engulfed in a cloud of depression. She refused to talk with the pastor.

Mike finally called an "emergency staff meeting" after the report from the doctor. Mary, Mike and the three children (12, 11, 9) gathered around the table to talk. After prayer, Mike declared that the family had reached its limits and that other arrangements for Rose were necessary.

How should this family proceed? How can a family recognize when it is time to terminate in-home caregiving for an aging relative? Here are some principles to help answer this question. Apply them to Mike and Mary and see if you think they have reached the transfer point for Rose. Has a nursing home become the best way to pay the debt of love both to Rose and each other in the family? The Scripture from which these principles logically arise is Romans 13:8.

Principle #1: It is time to terminate in-home care when we become inadequate to provide care.

The inadequacy may arise for various reasons. It may be that the primary caregiver no longer is physically capable of giving the care. It may be that the caregiver has exhausted the outside support systems which have enabled him/her to function. It may be that the caregiver does not have the emotional stamina to give the necessary care, or a new level of care which has developed. Perhaps a change in business demands makes continued care impossible.

Principle #2: It is time to terminate in-home caregiving when the recipient becomes inadequate to profit from the care.

What must always be kept in mind is that love does what is best for our loved ones, not ourselves. When the relative becomes inadequate to profit from the caregiver, it is time for the one offering the care to relinquish the role. For any number of reasons, caregivers often become caregivers, not so much out of love for the needy person, but to fulfill some need of their own, real or assumed. Such motivation is not paying the debt of love.

Principle #3: It is time to terminate in-home caregiving when the recipient's desires are inconsistent with his needs.

Not infrequently parents attempt to extract promises from children never to put them into a nursing home. In light of the conditions of some nursing homes, before regulations, and some state "poor houses" of the youth of today's frail elderly, it is little wonder that they may go to extreme lengths to insure that children will not place them in one of "those places!" My father often repeated this demand to me. My answer was always the same. "Dad, as long as I can care for you in a proper manner, I'll not place you in a nursing home."

We can see this love played out in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He did not immediately give the care to people that they desired and often not in the way they desired it. He provided care for them in a manner consistent with their spiritual need. One he healed immediately by touching the individual and sending him off whole instructing him how to grow spiritually from the experience. In another case he used an indirect means of providing the healing in order that his care for the spiritual needs of that person might have its greatest effect both upon the individual and his world. His care was consistent with the needs of the person, not just his desires. This is love.

To state this principle another way, it is not what they want, but what they need that must be provided. When proper twenty-four hour medical care or constant physical care is indicated, then a nursing home may well be what they need. Manipulations, guilt trips, and anger notwithstanding, the baton of care must be passed off to another.

These three principles well marinated with Romans 13:8 can be the litmus test for terminating home care and initiating nursing home care.

HOME, WHERE EXTENDED CARE BEGINS

Teaching Aids

1. Teacher should study these verses and be prepared to lead a discussion of their application to the stress created in such family situations. (A good resource would be *Christ and Your Problems*, J. E. Adams, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.)
2. You may divide the class into sections selecting a section moderator by asking the man or woman with the most children to accept the role. Have each group discuss how this subject could best be presented to children. Have the group list possible objections of children (these may be concerns not spoken but felt) and several alternative answers that may be given to them.

Some Additional Teaching Ideas:

1. Ask your pastor for two or three possible suggestions for people who have cared for a family member in their home who he thinks would be willing to participate as a panel in your class. You should act as moderator and facilitate a profitable interchange. It would be wise to meet with these folks in advance to establish parameters for the discussion. There may be questions which an individual would rather not address. One person may be more adequately prepared to answer this or that specific question. Previous knowledge will help you make the discussion of a disquieting subject more palatable.
2. If you have a nursing home administrator or nurse in the congregation (or one of these individuals in the community who is comfortable in church setting), you may want to:
 - a. Develop a list of questions and interview this (these) persons on cassette to be played in class (no more than ten minutes). This could be done in a block or question by question allowing for discussion after each answer.
 - b. Ask this person to come to class to give a ten-minute presentation on "Families who wait too long to make a nursing home placement."
3. If you have a class member(s) who has had the experience of providing care in his home and you know this person well enough to be assured that his presentation would be profitable, you may ask this person to share his experience. Recognize that this individual becomes vulnerable. Questions may be penetrating and his judgment may be called into question. Be prepared for intervention.
4. The questionnaire on the following pages may be used in part with this lesson. It was developed to be administered to family members at the time of admission. It is offered here as a self-provocative instrument to help individuals evaluate both their knowledge and their attitudes about the nursing home situation.

Family Member Self-Inventory

Section I

Please place a "T" (true) or "F" (false) before each statement.

My perceptions of a nursing home have included the following:

1. ___ A warehouse for old people.
2. ___ A service for fee extended to families to enable them to provide the care they can no longer give.
3. ___ Characterized by unclean conditions.
4. ___ A place to live as fully as possible within diminishing abilities to be self-caring and directing.
5. ___ Heavy use of medication to keep residents quiet.
6. ___ Bland, poor quality food.
7. ___ Minimal care provided by marginal employees.
8. ___ A place where social contact is encouraged and enhanced through planned programs.
9. ___ Characterized by nutritious meals planned for elderly physiological needs.
10. ___ Extended hospital care in a hospital-like setting.
11. ___ Characterized by bland decor.

Section II

This questionnaire was devised for use after the entrance processing of a family member to a nursing home. If you have not experienced this processing with your family member, 1) skip questions in this section that are meaningless to you, 2) answer the remainder of the questions in terms of your relationship with your elderly family member. Please place an "X" before as many statements under each entry that apply to you.

12. When patient rights were discussed I was impressed with:
 - ___ The legislative concern with my relative's rights.
 - ___ The attempt to preserve my relative's dignity.
 - ___ The responsibility placed upon family for resident care.
 - ___ The extent to which one patient's rights could impinge on another patient's rights.
13. My relationship with my relative would be characterized as:
 - ___ Warm and affectionate.
 - ___ Distant and caring.
 - ___ Strained.
 - ___ Deteriorating.
 - ___ Responsible for.
14. I understand that Family Council is:
 - ___ A nursing home organization run by the staff.
 - ___ A private membership organization.
 - ___ A resident run program.
 - ___ A family member run organization.
 - ___ A volunteer run organization for the benefit of residents and their families.

15. I understand the purpose(s) of Family Council to be:
- A sort of "group therapy" session for family members.
 - An educational organization.
 - An organization to provide a forum for communication between family and staff.
 - An organization of family members to provide services to residents.
16. Family Council strikes me as:
- One more activity to demand my time.
 - Another occasion for me to feel guilty because I cannot or do not want to participate.
 - A useful tool to enhance communication between staff and families.
 - A useful tool to promote communication between families and enhance understanding.
17. I am inclined to attend Family Council for the following reason(s).
- I want to know what is going on at the facility.
 - I want to have access to the facility management.
 - I want to support the staff and other families.
 - I anticipate the need for support of other family members.
18. I am inclined not to attend Family Council for the following reason(s).
- I am a private person.
 - I think the staff is competent and trust their judgment.
 - I have too many other responsibilities.
 - It would be too painful for me to engage in conversation about my relative in the facility context.
19. Private pay residents should:
- Receive preferential treatment.
 - Be treated on an equal basis with government assisted residents.
 - Be in a separate wing of the facility.
 - None of the above.
20. I would appreciate help with visitation in the following areas:
- Appropriate topics of discussion.
 - Appropriate activities to attempt.
 - The value of visitation in light of my relative's condition.
 - None of the above.
21. At the time of admission I experienced the following:
- A sense of relief.
 - A sense of relief accompanied by guilt or feeling relieved.
 - Guilt for placing my relative in the facility.
 - Fear of what effect the placement will have on my relative.

Section III

If you have not placed your family member in a nursing home, please answer these questions with this prospect in view. Research and experience indicate that people placing a family member in a nursing home

endure some of the following emotions. These are normal. In order that our staff might be better prepared to serve you and your relative, please mark with an "X" the following statements which apply to you.

- 22. ___ I feel guilty for placing my relative in the facility.
- 23. ___ I feel angry at my relative because I had to admit him/her.
- 24. ___ I feel angry toward other family members who are not helping me with this task.
- 25. ___ I feel guilty because I could not keep my relative at home.
- 26. ___ I am fearful that my relative will be unhappy in the facility.
- 27. ___ I am fearful that my relative will lose his/her dignity.
- 28. ___ I feel angry because of the financial burden of my relative's estate.
- 29. ___ I struggle with the resentment over the depletion of my relative's estate.
- 30. ___ I am concerned that my relative will become inactive.
- 31. ___ I am concerned that my relative's funds will be depleted before his/her death because our family cannot afford to pay for his/her care.
- 32. ___ I vacillate between resentment and guilt over the demand of visiting my relative.

Section IV

If your family member is not in a nursing home yet, please skip questions 33-35 and answer the remainder of the questions in terms of your anticipation of your family member's move to a nursing home. Please fill in the blanks or complete the question with a brief statement or discussion.

- 33. The following describes my perceptions of visitation in the facility.
 - a. I should visit my relative ___ times per week.
 - b. My visits should be ___ hours in length.
 - c. The following people should visit this relative at least weekly, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
- 34. I should feel free to assist the staff when I am visiting by,

- 35. In the short time my relative has been a resident, I have found my visits to be:
 - a. A _____ experience because _____.
 - b. Visitation seems to be _____ since my relative _____.
- 36. What is your greatest concern for your relative who has become a resident in this facility?
- 37. What do you understand least about the functions of this facility?
- 38. What things in your contact with the nursing home did or do you find offensive?
- 39. Which of your relative's needs are most important to you?
- 40. What, if anything, have you seen in this facility that has bothered you?

If there any other information that you think would be helpful for us to know?

A CAREGIVER'S SELF-RESPONSIBILITIES

I have a responsibility . . .

. . . to recognize that my role as a caregiver has been providentially arranged.

. . . to seek prayerfully God's assistance for the task of caregiving.

. . . to provide a sense of dignity for my charge by developing a godly attitude about myself and the task of caregiving.

. . . to take care of myself. This is a God-given responsibility and not a matter of selfishness. Proper care of myself will enable me to take better care of my relative.

. . . to seek help from others even though my charge objects. I am responsible to recognize my own limits of endurance and strength.

. . . to maintain those aspects of my life which do not include my charge in the same manner I would if he/she were healthy.

. . . to acknowledge my feelings, to recognize them as symptoms of fatigue or improper attitudes and to take actions necessary to appropriately process them.

. . . to reject attempts by my charge to manipulate (consciously or unconsciously) me through guilt, anger, or depression.

. . . to offer consideration, affection, forgiveness and acceptance to my charge regardless of his/her attitudes.

. . . to accept consideration, affection, forgiveness from my charge and recognize that humility does not mean inability to accept gratitude.

. . . to protect my individuality and to make a life for myself that will sustain me and enable me to sustain other normal family relationships during and beyond the time of caring for my charge.

. . . to seek out resources to aid in the caregiving enterprise including innovations to assist caregivers.

. . . to seek to share my knowledge and experience with others who may profit from my pilgrimage.

(This is an adaptation, revision (from "rights" to "responsibility") and expansion of "A caregiver's bill of rights." Horne, Jo. "Caregiving: Helping an Aging Loved One," Mount Prospect: Scott Foreman and Co., 1985.)

Caregiver's Assistance Directory

"Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land in which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12).

This directory has been assembled to help you "honor thy father and thy mother" by giving you access to various assistance information and programs. The appearance of an organization or a piece of literature in this directory does not signal the endorsement of these resources in their entirety.

Alzheimer's Disease:

Families who have loved ones afflicted with Alzheimer's disease may call a toll-free number for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders

Association (ADRDA). The number is (800) 621-0379. In Illinois call (800) 572-6037. ADRDA has more than 160 chapters and 1,000 support groups nationwide to help caregivers. By calling the toll-free numbers, you can get more information.

Books:

1. *Caregiving: Helping an Aged Loved One*, by Jo Horne. Copies can be obtained by writing to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) at AARP Books, 1865 Miner St., Des Plaines, IL 60016. Cost is \$9.95 for AARP members, \$13.95 for non-members, postage paid. This book is an all-in-one reference book for caregivers.
2. *The Age Care Source Book*, by Jean Crichton (Simon & Schuster, \$9.95), is a fact book covering financial, medical and emotional issues regarding aging.
3. *The Home Healthcare Solution*, by Janet Zhun Nassif (Harper & Row, \$9.95), is a complete consumer care guide with shortcuts, tips and tax-saving advice.
4. *Who Cares?* is an excellent 80-page compilation of practical advice for those who care for a dependent older person at home, and is written by those who actually do. It is available for \$7.50, postage paid from Andrus Volunteers, the Andrus Gerontology Center, USC, University Park/MC 0191, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0191. California residents need to add forty-two cents for sales tax.
5. *Guide to Housing Alternatives for Older Citizens*, written by Margaret Gold, Ph. D., can be ordered from Consumer Reports Books, 540 Barnum Ave., Bridgeport, CT 06608. It provides indepth information, health and financial checklists and a listing of key sources for help in dealing with housing issues for the elderly. Cost is \$9.95 (plus \$3.00 postage).
6. *You, Your Parent and the Nursing Home, A Family's Guide to Long Term Care*, by Nancy Fox and published by Prometheus Books, Buffalo, NY (\$10.95). The book helps relatives to cope with emotional and social pressures and shows them how to channel their energies constructively when torn between their responsibilities as parents, children and community members.

Booklets:

1. Free guidebooks on long-term care are offered by the American Association of Retired Persons, Health Advocacy Services, 1909 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20049 (Attn: Fulfillment). This same address can be used to solicit information on long-term care insurance policies.
2. The University of Kansas Gerontology Center publishes every two months an excellent periodical called "Parent Care; Resources to Assist Family Caregivers." This practical publication is specifically designed to meet the needs of the caregiver at home. Those interested in subscribing can write: Parent Care, Gerontology Center, 316 Strong Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.

3. The National Rehabilitation Information Center provides information and fact sheets on research, products and resources related to the needs of people caring for parents with physical limitations. This organization may be reached by calling the following toll-free number: (800) 34N-ARIC or (301) 588-9284 from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. EST, Monday through Friday. Or write: The National Rehabilitation Information Center, Suite 935, 8455 Colesville Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20910.
4. The following agencies are excellent sources of help for caregivers.

Home Care Agencies: The National Association for Home Care is a lobbying group and national clearinghouse of information regarding home care agencies. Available from these agencies are pamphlets such as *All About Home Care: Consumer's Guide* (\$2.00), *How to Select a Home Care Agency* (free), and reprints of *Caring Magazine's ABCs of Home Care* (\$7.50). You can write to the National Association of Home Care at this address: 519 C St. NE, Stanton Park, Washington, DC 20002.

Housing Options: A free packet of caregiving brochures and information on housing options for seniors is available by sending a stamped (39 cents), self-addressed legal-size envelope to the American Association of Homes for the Aging, 1129 20th St, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036.

Legal Services: The transferring of assets to spouse or children, and living trusts are best handled by attorneys who are familiar with Medicaid rules and regulations. An attorney attempting to help a family with the preservation of their assets may get consulting assistance from the American Bar Association Commission on the Legal Problems of the Elderly, American Bar Association, 1800 M St, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Also, local lawyers familiar with these issues can be reached by checking with an Area Agency on Aging office in your community or a local legal services office.

Local Services Access: There are nearly 700 chapters of the Area Agency on Aging located across the United States. They provide free advice, needs assessments, referrals and information about such local services as adult day care, respite care, home health aid, transportation and escort services, homemaker and chore services, housing services and support groups. A specific Area Agency on Aging office should be listed in the phone directory. Or write to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, 600 Maryland Ave., SW, West Wing 100, Washington, DC 20024. At the same address you may write to the National Council on Aging, Inc., which publishes an idea book on caregiver support groups (\$6.50 postage paid). This resource is the most current and complete national directory of caregiver support groups. Also available from this group is a set of eight family home-caring guides on such topics as legal and financial planning, avoiding home accidents and long distance caregiving (\$5.50 postage paid).

Workshop: The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) offers a caregiving workshop, "Hand in Hand," to community organizations and agencies. For further information, contact the Social Outreach and Support Section of AARP at the above address.

Chapter 11

THE NURSING HOME NECESSITY

Lesson Objectives:

1. To help student determine a nursing home necessity.
2. To help student determine role in nursing home care.
3. To help student determine important factors in choosing a nursing home.

Lesson Outline:

- I. Biblical Principles for Sorting Out Responsibilities.
- II. Determining What Constitutes a Nursing Home Facility.
- III. Dealing With a Nursing Home Necessity.
 - A. Choosing a Nursing Home.
 - B. Developing a Care Plan.
 - C. Developing a Plan to Care For You.

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 72:13
Psalm 111:4
Col. 3:12

Twenty-five million people sixty-five or older were living in America in 1980. That was 1 percent of the population. By the year 2030 the projections are yielding a population of fifty-five million or 22 percent of the total number of people in the United States. At the present time persons eighty or more are the fastest growing segment of the population. Between 1980 and 2000 there will be an expected increase of 67 percent in this age group. Approximately 63 percent of this group experience some degree of functional disability. At the rate of the current trends the numbers of people in nursing homes will increase by approximately 50 percent in twenty years and 100 percent in fifty years. The average nursing home resident is seventy-eight to eighty-two years of age, white, female, widowed or never been married and suffering multiple chronic health conditions.

This growing number of aging Americans precipitates the "nursing home necessity." The primary caregiver is a female member of the family. With the increasing number of working women, it is clear that this resource of caregivers is decreasing. How else can America, and the Christian American in particular, meet this escalating demand? Is it the Christian's responsibility to care for aging parents? What about the aging uncle or aunt who had no children and whose immediate

family is no longer living or declines to exercise sufficient care for such parents?

No one likes to face these possibilities. But the statistics leave little doubt that many Christian Americans will encounter the necessity of caring for an older family member. In this chapter we will be discussing biblical principles which impinge upon how this life contingency should be negotiated.

The following situation of Frank and Barbara is not typical. But it is presented in order to illustrate that the biblical principles can guide people through the most difficult predicaments.

Frank's parents are in their early eighties. His mother is confined to a wheel chair and his father is partially blind. They have lived with Frank and his family for the past seven years. It has been a comfortable arrangement. Recently his father's health has deteriorated significantly. He has been hospitalized twice and has required special care upon returning home. Gena, Frank's mother, has begun to experience regular loss of bladder control. On the day that his father came home from the hospital, Mary's mother suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. Yesterday Frank and Mary were informed that Sarah (Mary's mother) does not qualify for government assistance with nursing home costs after the first fourteen days since she is medically able to return home. John (Mary's father) is in such poor health that he cannot care for his wife. To complicate matters further, John's brother (Mike) is in good health, but has lost sufficient amount of his rational capacities that he needs to live with someone who will supervise his medication as well as his daily life routine. However, he has no children and no family other than Frank and Mary. Just prior to John's first hospitalization, Frank and Mary had decided that they should also care for Mike.

It is obvious that Frank and Mary need assistance. It is also quite possible that a nursing home has become a necessity. As you read through the suggested principles, ask yourself how you would apply them if you were in Frank and Mary's place. (1)

Biblical Principles For Sorting Out Responsibilities

1. **Caring.** I am my brother's keeper (Gen. 4:8-10). As a believer we have a responsibility to look after our brother's (a parent or older relative in this case) welfare. At times that responsibility may be delegated, but it cannot be disavowed.
2. **Compassion.** Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of one of these you will be rewarded (Matt. 25:34-46). Compassion is a hallmark of Christianity. A visit to a nursing home, and in particular to the floor or ward where care is provided for the feeble-minded, will generate at least one emotion for the average person. This one emotion is not something that anyone likes to admit to experiencing in this context. It is the emotion of disgust. But, the overriding emotion is compassion. The heart of the visitor fills with a desire to bring something better to the people observed. This sensation is good. As a Christian we are responsible to be compassionate and determine just what it is we can do for this person.

3. **Concern.** James (Jas. 1:26-27) uses a verb that is simply translated “visit” in our English versions. This is unfortunate. The word carries the meaning of intent. The possessor of true religion does not just pay the widow a friendly visit. He visits with the intent of helping in whatever way needed. The word also occurs in an infinitive form which expresses purpose. Kistemaker observes, “Social conditions in ancient times were such that orphans and widows were unprotected (unprovided for) because they had no guardian (caregiver) and breadwinner. If one has true religion, he will express concern by providing for legitimate needs” (Kistemaker, p. 147).
4. **Love.** (Rom. 13:8) Within the family of God love is the prevailing characteristic because God, our Father, is Himself love. He has set our example even in the social realm. “For God so loved that He gave. . .” is the grandest example possible. However, God gives some clear directives about love (see Ps. 68:5; 146:9; Deut. 10:18 and Matt. 6:32). It is clear from the Word that as God has set the example, that He expects His children to imitate. (See also Deut. 14:29; Exek. 22:7; Acts 6:1-6.)
5. **Leave and Cleave.** In the institution of marriage, God lays down the “divide and absorb” principle of marriage. A man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. He and his wife divide from their families or origin and become absorbed in each other to create a new family unit. This joining together at the leaving of their respective parents is a principle that is not to be violated even though the care of elderly parents may impinge upon it. Caregiving must flow from the cleaving of a couple not the diluting or dissolving of the couple.
6. **Financial responsibility is to children before parents** (Prov. 13:22). The care (even education must be considered) of children takes precedence over caring for parents. The first does not displace the second, but alternatives must be found for the second that do not prevent the accomplishment of the first.
7. **Spiritual dedication of financial resources is not sufficient reason not to aid parents** (Mark 7:11 Berkley Version). It is clear from this passage that the Lord will not be pleased with such a spiritual shame. (2)

What Constitutes A Nursing Home Necessity?

The tendency for most people is to look at a situation like that of Frank above and conclude that this is where a nursing home becomes a necessity. Few of us would disagree that Frank’s family is in need of the assistance provided by a nursing home. However, the nursing home necessity may arise in much less severe circumstances.

There are some older adults who reach the place of no longer being able to live alone, who would actually be more comfortable in a nursing home. The social interaction, organized activities, peer group companionship may contribute to the life satisfaction of some older adults more than living with family would. For those of us who have had pleasant family relationships, this seems incredulous. But for families

who have conflict ridden relationships or distant relationships, such an arrangement may be very satisfactory. There are also some older adults who simply prefer to be with peers. Furthermore, a family may provide housing, medication management and general oversight but the demands on each of its members may preclude sufficient time for a daily game of checkers, lingering conversation or any form of companionship from 8:00 A.M. until after work hours. Given a choice, the older adult may prefer congregate living.

Each family will have to decide for itself when a nursing home has become a necessity. This is usually a decision that should be made in consultation with several professional providers. Depending upon the case the following individuals should be part of the consulting team. The older adult (if mental capacity allows), the older adult's physician, a social worker (may access through hospital), a local government agent (title differs under different jurisdictions) who may assist with placement in government operated facility and financial arrangements, and last but not least, the minister. The burden of responsibility to assemble this team will most often fall upon the next of kin except in the case of hospital discharge. In this case the hospital social worker will frequently expedite placement.

When the Necessity Becomes A Reality

Choosing A Nursing Home (3)

How do you determine which nursing home to utilize? In some instances there will not be a choice. This is true for several reasons. There may be very little availability. Some communities do not have sufficient nursing home space. There may be financial constraints. Nursing homes are expensive. They range from approximately \$1,400.00 to \$3,400.00 per month. Some will take public assisted residents and some will not. Distance from family may limit choices, also.

Here are some suggestions for choosing a nursing home:

1. Visit various homes. If there are choices, visit them. After you have collected the data from each home create a report card for yourself and grade each home.
 - a. Decide ahead of time the services desired. Take the literature given at each home and organize it so that you can compare "apples to apples."
 - b. Decide what aspects of home are important to you and your resident family member.
 - c. Interview several workers (even a maid). Ask how they like working at the facility and with the elderly. (NIA, a professional organization, research shows that workers who like elderly spawn improvement in elderly attitudes and conditions).
2. Review the nursing home's state inspection records (available at the home or Social Security office or Department of Social Services.)
3. Read the contract very closely (you may want to have an attorney review it).

4. Contact the Department of Social Services for financial information and assistance.

Developing A Care Plan

When a loved one moves to a nursing home, the family responsibility to that person is not absolved. There are three things to keep in mind. The first is the fact that the nursing home may not, and in some cases does not, take complete care of your loved one. Presuming you have considered these matters in making the choice of home, discuss them again when your loved one actually becomes a resident. Find out just what you are allowed to do and if there are specific things the homes does not do. Remember that companionship is a high priority. Review the principles above and ask yourself how these impinge upon your care plan. Personal things are often most appreciated. I remember one story about a woman who went by the nursing home each day on the way to work and spent fifteen minutes brushing her mother's long hair. The mother could no longer raise her arms to do this task and the nurses simply pulled her hair back. This loving attention to a small detail brought praise for her daughter whenever someone visited the mother.

Focus on quality. You cannot do everything you would like to do or that needs to be done. Therefore focus on quality. The story above illustrates this point also. Brushing her mother's hair was quality because it meant so much to her mother.

Be realistic about your time. I have spoken with many people who live under a constant sense of guilt. They have set goals, or let others set them for them, for a care plan which given their time restraints was impossible. But they judged themselves by these goals and therefore always came up wanting. This condition robs you as the caregiver of the joy of caring. It also disturbs your relationships to the Lord and your loved one. The Lord only gives each of us twenty-four hours. Most likely one of the reasons your loved one is in the home is because you and your family did not have the time to care for him at home. (4)

Developing A Personal Care Plan

There are three R's which a caregiver must observe. This is true whether caring for someone at home or someone in a nursing home. The first "R" is relaxation. A caregiver cannot cease to live his own life. Activities which have been part of one's life routine, like playing tennis Tuesday and Thursday after work, need to continue. An occasional departure is normal, but relaxation cannot become lax. Part of relaxation is companionship for oneself. Friendships should not be lost in the crush of carrying out a care plan for your loved one.

The second "R" is refreshment. Regular spiritual input into your life is essential. Do not give up church attendance to spend that time (even if you watch TV church with your loved one) at the nursing home. An occasional weekend missed from your care plan in order to go on a men's or women's retreat or a marriage retreat (spiritual in nature or just away with your spouse) is a necessary aspect of your own refreshment.

Remember, Jesus retreated from His care for the disciples and the people in general.

The third "R" is reassurance. Review your care plan periodically and evaluate its effectiveness in caring for your loved one and its effect upon you and your family. Remember that God does not expect you to be superman.

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THE NURSING HOME NECESSITY

Teaching Aids

- (1) Before continuing, divide the class into groups of three. Have the person whose father lived the longest be moderator. Ask the group to discuss three things:
 - a. For whom are Frank and Mary responsible? Give an order of priority.
 - b. What might Frank and Mary be prone to do?
 - c. What factor may determine for whom they care and who is placed in a nursing home?

- (2) Have your groups reassemble and decide how to apply these principles to help Frank and Mary make their decisions.

- (3) Visit a nursing home and request an interview with the administrator. Secure, if possible, a packet of literature given to prospective residents. Use this for demonstration purposes with this section.

- (4) Here is a great opportunity to utilize a personal testimony. Find someone in your class or church who has had (or presently has) a loved one in a nursing home. Share this section with them. Ask them about their care plan. They probably did not write out a plan, but will be able to identify one. Your conversation will generate some interesting class interaction.

Chapter 12

CAESAR, ME AND AGING

Lesson Objectives:

1. To expose the student to problem of government assistance for some Christians.
2. To help the student appreciate the biblical principles helpful in understanding this problem.
3. To provide the student with a basic understanding of housing choices and levels of care for elderly citizens.

Lesson Outline:

- I. The Attitude of Some Christians Toward Government Assistance.
- II. Biblical Principles Regarding Government Assistance.
 - A. Principle One.
 - B. Principle Two.
 - C. Principle Three.
 - D. Principle Four.
- III. Overview of the Government Delivery System.
- IV. Major Programs Not Administered Through the AAA's.
- V. Conclusion.

Scripture Readings:

Romans 13:1-7
1 Peter 2:13-14
Titus 3:1

George retired at age sixty-five. It took Jim, his son, several months to convince George that receiving Social Security would not violate his Christian convictions. Jim sat down with his father and worked out at length his contributions to the system and the accumulated value of compound interest in order to help George see that he had, in fact, created the funds which he could now be withdrawing. George finally agreed that he could draw Social Security, at least until he had exhausted his contributions.

George and Jim are factious people. But George represents the attitude of some Christians toward government programs for the elderly. "We are to be dependent upon God and not Caesar!" To receive assis-

tance from the social system is to fail to exercise faith in God for His provision.

Is such an attitude valid? What relationship should aging Christians sustain to government programs? Is faith in God's provision circumscribed when government assistance is accepted? These are real issues. For example, when a man is ordained to the ministry, he has the option as a conscientious objector to opt out of the Social Security system. The question of conscience is significant enough the system provides this window of opportunity based upon religious convictions. Therefore, contemplate the following principles from Romans 13:1-7 when considering Caesar's role in aging assistance.

Principle #1: Distinction of relationships sustained by the Christian (Rom. 13:1-7).

James Stifler offers helpful insight into this principle. He writes, "There are obligations flowing from the endowments of certain gifts, and other obligations flowing from fraternal relations, obligations of love. The former were discussed in 12:1-8 and the latter in 12:9-21. These are all purely spiritual obligations having their source in the relations to Christ (the Savior). But the Christian has another relation, a natural relation, having its origin not in Christ (the Savior) but in God (the Creator). The former chapter is spiritual or Christian (redemptive); the one before us is divine (creative). These are clearly distinct. Confusion here makes church and state one, and reduces Christianity to sociology. It is easy to distinguish between what is spiritual (redemptive) and what is divine (creative). The Holy Spirit has brought about institutions and relations unknown to nature. The church with its various functions is the sum of these, and they have no existence before Christ came. But there were men and relations long before. God instituted the latter . . . for men. They are divine (creative), but not spiritual (redemptive)" (Stifler, p. 214).

In other words, as a creature of God man sustains a creaturely relationship to God. But as a Christian he sustains a filial (redemptive) relationship to God. The principle which grows out of these relationships is that man is both a citizen of the church and the state. Both are ordained by God and neither invalidates the other.

Principle #2: Subjection to the state is incumbent upon the Christian (Rom. 13:1,5).

Paul affirms this principle twice in this passage. He introduces his subject with, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (13:1a). In verse 5 he reiterates this thought when he says, "Wherefore, ye must needs be subject. . . ."

John Calvin's observation makes this principle clear.

"He calls them *higher powers*, because they excel other men, rather

than *supreme*, as though they possess the highest authority. Magistrates, therefore, are so called in relation to those who are subject to them, and not from any comparison between them. By using this expression Paul intended, I think, to remove the empty curiosity of those who often ask by what right those who are in authority came by their power. It ought really to be sufficient for us that they rule. They have not attained this high position by their own strength, but have been placed there by the hand of the Lord. By mentioning *every soul* Paul removes every exception, lest any should claim to be immune from the common submission to obedience" (Calvin, p. 280).

Calvin had no doubt that Paul held all men responsible to be in subjection to the state.

Principle #3: Government is established by God for good (13:3-4).

It seems that Paul speaks of good in three ways. First of all he uses "good" to describe the kind of works which government does not oppose. The word which Paul uses here is a wide ranging word and is certainly able to be inclusive of modern day social programs.

Secondly, Paul observes that government applauds those who themselves do good. Thus, Paul indicates that within the social network of society, the state encourages the development of good works. Again, the concept is inclusive enough to encompass social assistance programs. In our society, this may take the form of the federal government awarding block grants through various private agencies to fund programs (good works) which they have designed.

The third observation regarding Paul's use of the word "good" is this. He considers government the minister of good to the Christian. He says, "For he (state) is the minister of God to thee for good." This is a rather strong assertion of God's intention for the state. Calvin again comments lucidly when he writes,

"Magistrates may learn from this the nature of their calling. They are not to rule on their own account, but for the public good. Nor do they have unbridled power, but power that is restricted to the welfare of their subjects. In short, they are responsible to God and to men in the exercise of their rule. Since they have been chosen by God and do His business, they are answerable to Him. But the ministry which God has committed to them has reference to their subjects. They have also therefore an obligation to them. Paul instructs individuals that it is by the divine kindness that they are defended by the sword of rulers against the injuries of the wicked" (Calvin, p. 283).

While Paul had largely the protection of citizens in view, it certainly is true that there are swords not made with metal the forces of which the state can effectively minimize. While neither the governments of Paul or Calvin had developed significant social programs, it seems to be clear to this writer that "the minister of God to thee for good" has evolved in modern society to include a diversity of assistance programs for a variety of needs. It also seems clear that a passage like this has given impetus to the social implications of the Gospel. Notice, it did

not give rise to the “social gospel.” But the Christian attitude toward government, the influence of a “mega-segment” of society being Christians and the resulting interaction between the redemptive and the creative spheres has produced a Western society in which the state has become in a broad sense “the minister to thee for good.” It is important that this advancement be seen as the consequence of Christianity. While this condition is not to be assumed as always continuing, there is good reason to participate in its benefits.

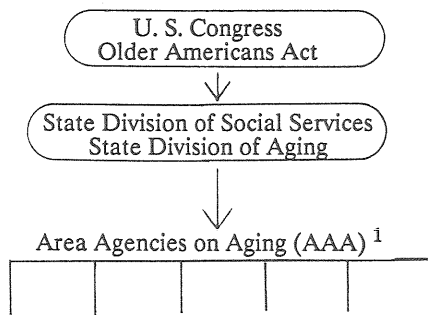
Principle #4: That for which you pay taxes is that to which you are entitled (Rom. 13:6-7).

God established government for the purposes discussed above. God instructs Christians to pay taxes. Therefore, when the Christian receives services from state agencies, he is participating in that to which he has contributed. God established government to do good. Government collects taxes to do good. Accessing the good offered is to capitalize on the system which God has put in place.

Some will argue that this passage only has to do with maintaining peace and punishing evil. However, it should be remembered that Rome had a sophisticated system of services. A model observed is that Paul claimed his right to Roman citizenship, a good ministered by the state, and utilized it for his own welfare.

Overview of Government Delivery System of Services for Aging

The following diagram presents an overview of the government’s delivery system of services for the aging. Not all existing services, federal, state or local level, are accounted for in this flow chart. However, information on other available services can usually be obtained through the office of the Area Agency on Aging. This agency is often referred to as the AAA.



Major Programs Not Administered Through The AAA

Social Security: Created in 1935 this program is administered by the Social Security Administration. It is funded by employee and employer taxes. Benefits are paid to workers and their dependent survivors. It is

¹May be non-profit organizations or division of state government. Some states have multiple numbers of AAA and some only a few. These agencies contract out many of the services they offer to other non-profit organizations.

designed to provide a base line economic security for those who have been retired or disabled. While eligibility requirements are complex, an easy basic test of two questions provides an indicator. Has the worker been employed in a "covered" position? This question may be easy to answer by simply checking to see if Social Security tax was deducted from the payroll check or if the individual paid self-employed tax. The second qualifying question is not quite as easy to answer. However, the Social Security Administration office can easily determine if the individual has worked long enough to reach the insured or vested status necessary to qualify for benefits.

Social Security is not automatically sent to the retiree. The seeker must fill out an application through his local Social Security Administration office. If an individual is unable to visit an office, a complete application may be mailed or a representative will visit his home.

Partial benefits may be drawn at age sixty-two and full benefits at age sixty-five. Depending upon a person's circumstances, an early retirement may be advantageous. A visit to the local office on or about the sixty-second birthday to determine the details may be wise. In retirement planning, the Social Security office should be approached at least ninety days prior to the retirement date. This will insure the inception of benefits at the date of retirement. If there are any questions about eligibility, it is wise for the applicant to be accompanied by a representative when making application for benefits. A member of the clergy, an attorney, a social worker, a friend or a relative may serve in this capacity.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): This is a program of the federal government which provides cash assistance for aged, blind and disabled individuals who have a meager income and few assets. In addition, some states subsidize this federal program. This program is administered by the Social Security Administration office. However, in some states the welfare department is also involved in its administration.

The key word is "supplemental." In other words, this program supplements the individual's income and is therefore received in conjunction with Social Security, Medicaid and in some states, food stamps. Three requirements determine eligibility: age, must be sixty-five or older, blind or disabled, and be below the income guidelines set by Congress. Application is made through the local Social Security Administration office.

Veterans' Benefits: If a person is sixty-five or older and a veteran, he should be encouraged to check with the Veterans Administration for possible benefits. Veterans Administration pensions are intended to assist poverty stricken veterans who are sixty-five or who are disabled. These benefits extend to impoverished surviving dependents also.

Medicare: Medicare is the principal public health care program for persons who are sixty-five or older or who are disabled. Eligibility for Medicare has nothing to do with financial need. The Medicare program is divided into two parts: hospital insurance (often called Part A) and

supplementary medical insurance (Part B). Hospital insurance largely to pay for services rendered by large medical institutions as hospitals and nursing homes and is automatically available to Social Security recipients. Supplementary medical insurance to pay for services provided by doctors and outpatient clinics and for other services not covered by Part A is optional. It is supported by monthly premiums paid by the recipient of Part B.

The largest group of Part A beneficiaries, those sixty-five and over are eligible for Social Security or Railroad Retirement benefits, receive their Medicare cards when they receive their Social Security or Railroad Retirement cards.

Part B benefits are available to people who are disabled or who are at least sixty-five. The individual must take steps to enroll in the supplementary medical insurance program.

The best place to get information about Medicare is directly from the Social Security Administration.

Medicaid: Medicaid is a program of medical assistance to low income people, operated jointly by the states and the federal government. Exactly which services are available depends on the state of residence and the basis of eligibility for Medicaid. Application for Medicaid is made by submitting a written application to the state agency designated to handle Medicaid applications, usually the department of social services or public welfare. In some states, application can be made at a Social Security office. If uncertain where to apply, find out by contacting a local welfare agency.

Welfare: Welfare is money paid by the state or federal government to people of any age who do not have enough to provide for their essential needs - food, rent and clothing. Need is the basic requirement for receiving welfare. There is a welfare office in every county and in all but the smallest towns. Application must be made at a local office.

Food Stamps: Food stamps are government provided credit for some food purchases. There are two requirements for buying food stamps: low income and few resources. If an older person is receiving welfare, he or she should be immediately certified for food stamp program eligibility. The amount paid for food stamps depends on income and family size.

Conclusion:

At the very least it can be said that the principles studied in this chapter make it difficult for the Christian to reject out-of-hand programs of good works devised and administered by the state. Each Christian and each family will have to decide for themselves whether or not in good conscience he or they are able to participate in the benefits of such programs. But no family should reject such aid without a careful evaluation of the principles suggested in this study.

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CAESAR, ME AND AGING

Teaching Aids

(1) Introduction:

To introduce this study, use the summary material in the next few paragraphs. Then break the class into four groups (two groups if your class is small). Assign each group one passage and the discussion questions. Then bring the class back together, have a report from each group and attempt to enumerate some helpful principles regarding the utilization of government resources to supplement aging expenses. (Twenty minutes)

Most evangelical Christians seem to be conservatives politically. Most political conservatives do not have much sympathy for government social programs. This stance produces some rather binding dilemmas when the problems of aging and the inordinate expenses are encountered by the individual and his family.

What is the role of the government in the problems of aging for the Christian and the church? When one delves into the problems and begins to understand the efforts made by government agencies to establish programs which respect the church and state issues and at the same time offer cooperative assistance to the church in solving some of the gerontological problems in our society, one cannot but be impressed with the efforts exerted.

One example of this has been the Section 202 housing code which provided funding to build congregate housing facilities for the elderly by religious organizations which in turn administered these units.

One area where many families will eventually face the decision whether or not to accept government contribution to the care of an aging family is in defraying the cost of a nursing home. Statistics from various sources suggest that about fifty million Americans and Canadians will breathe their last breath in a nursing home. At the current cost of \$1,600.00 a month (the very low end) to well over \$2,000.00 per month, many older adults and their families will quickly deplete their private funds. "The average nursing home resident is an eighty-one year old female, single or widowed, and her nursing home care is paid by Medicaid, a program created to serve the poor" (*Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, September 21, 1986).

How is the Christian to relate to the government and its programs for the aging population? This is a question that you will attempt to answer in this class today. Set aside to your current positions, and allow the Holy Spirit to be your teacher as you study the following passages as a class. What principles can you draw from these passages to help the modern Christian determine what role the government should play in the care of the elderly?

Romans 13:1-7

Discussion Questions:

1. To whom is the Christian to be in subjection?
2. What governments are established by God?
3. Is the refusal to utilize a government program when it applies to you a form of resisting its authority?
4. Nursing homes which cater to Medicaid clients are often substandard in their operation. Does this invalidate Paul's affirmation in verse 4 "for it is a minister of God to you for good?" What is the problem?
5. Why do you pay taxes (v. 7)? If we have paid taxes for the government to govern and part of that is governing in providing for the care of those who cannot any longer care for themselves, are we not then receiving what we have prepaid?

Titus 3:1-2

Discussion Questions:

1. To whom are Christians to be subject?
2. What are Christians to be ready to do?
3. What attitude and behaviour is to characterize the Christian with respect to government representatives (2 Tim. 2:25)?

1 Peter 2:13-15

Discussion Questions:

1. For who's sake are we to submit to government institutions?
2. How do we silence the ignorance of foolish men? Is it possible to do this partially by caring for the needy elderly who have become incapable of caring for themselves through government devised and assisted programs?

Daniel 1:3-8

Discussion Questions:

1. What was Daniel refusing (v. 8)?
2. Was Daniel the benefactor of the government?

3. Is there a qualitative difference between being the benefactor of the government when you will repay the government by your service (like going to the Naval Academy and then serving four years in the Navy), and serving the government for forty-five years as a citizen/tax payer and then being a recipient at the end of your life?

Thought Provoker:

A study of the Old Testament does not reveal instructions for how the elderly should be cared for. Yet as one reads the Old Testament, one finds the elderly respected and provided with care. What are some implications we might draw from this for today?

- (2) Next, approach the lesson by leading a study through Romans 13 developing the principles in the text.

References

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- Family Caregiving: A Manual for Caregiving of Older Adults*, The College of St. Scholaspiba, 1988, 1200 Kenwood Ave., Duluth, MN 58811, (\$13.00).