

Growing Old Gracefully

Miss Jane Scott, the well known and beloved Canadian journalist, writes: "I am hoping and praying that I shall go up one of these days. Then I shall bounce out of my hospital bed with all the exuberance of a four-year old on Christmas morning." What a blessing when you have such a beautiful outlook on life at the age of 78.

What does it mean when you have come to the age of retirement? How do you grow old gracefully? Time has come that we must study carefully and compassionately the uniqueness of old age. We have grown too accustomed to the idea that when you have reached retirement age you should be shelved away. We seem to think that old age is the equivalent of being non-constructive.

In many countries, the older generation is honoured and even placed in esteem. In our own land, and in our present generation there is not only a generation gap, but even a conflict.

Youth and their problems are in the limelight. Monies are readily available for numerous youth projects, but old age pensions are low, creating hardships for our senior citizens. Youth is supposed to have all the wisdom in the now age and the older folks come from the pre-lunar flight age and thus no longer know what is going on.

We place great faith in specific ages. For example, when you are 65 years of age, and whether you are in good health or not, you no longer have a regular place in society. In many cases, you have to retire at 65. As a consequence, many senior citizens feel rather useless. And the more they feel this way the quicker old age comes.

We cannot pinpoint a specific age and say, for example: "When you have become 35 you have reached the height of your mental and physical powers." One person may reach the pinnacle of his powers when he is 30 and another when he is 60.

Said Dr. Martin Crumpet, in his book *You Are Younger Than You Think*; "Michelangelo was writing poetry and designing buildings up to the time of his death at 90. Gladstone, prime minister of England, at 83, fought the greatest battle of his life – the passage of a home-rule bill. Goethe completed *Faust*, his greatest work, at 81. Titian finished his painting *The Last Supper* at age 80. You are younger than you think you are. When you have come of retiring age, life should still be treasured. Stay true to this earth as long as God gives you life! But at the same time you should know that God has great plans for the future.

Love life for the sake of the Lord! It has been given to you. So many meaningful things can be done at an older age. Eleanor Roosevelt said on her 77th birthday; "I think I have a good deal of my uncle Theodore in me because I could not, at any age, be content to take my place in a corner by the fireside and simply look on. Life was meant to be lived. One must never for whatsoever reason, turn his back on life."

Do you feel that you have too much time on your hands? Do you find life boring as you have no motivating activities? Pick up that book you always wanted to read but never had time to do so. Good books are wonderful companions. Of course, you'll have more time now to read and study the Word of God. And, you have more time for intercessory prayer.

Is this thought so strange? The elderly can be the intercessors praying for their children and grandchildren. The ministry of prayer is so much needed because in our world even Christians are often too busy for prayer. Faithful Christians who can pray for the needs of the church, nation and the world are desperately needed.

Have you considered participating in missionary outreach? The World Home Bible League has been using retirees who call on Christians in their own communities for collecting gifts needed for the purchasing and distributing of Bibles.

Love life! But remember that through faith in Jesus you also have a glorious future. This future is based on the concrete promises of God. I suggest to the senior citizens that they take to heart the advice of Jane Scott: "If you are over 60 you ought to be smarter and wiser than you used to be; more careful how you use your time, talents, strength and skills. You owe it to God and your neighbours to grow in grace and graciousness; you owe it to God and yourself to be useful and used as long as you are left on earth. Any day now, the Lord may come."

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