

Lesson 9 | January 29, 2023

Value Senior Adulthood

Study Text: Exodus 20:12; 2 Kings 2:5–14; 1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Timothy 5:1–11; 2 Timothy 1:5–6; 4:6–8

Central Truth: Older Christians should be valued in their role within family relationships.

Key Verse: 2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (KJV).

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will acknowledge the value of older Christians.
- Students will respect the role older Christians have within family relationships.
- Students will provide moral and spiritual support for older Christians.

Introducing the Study

Say: Today we will be examining the Scriptures to see how older Christians are to be valued in their role within family relationships. They have much to offer. Yet they also have needs, including respect and care so they can finish the Christian race well.

Opening Activity—Grandma (Grandpa) Always Said

Ask. *What sayings of wit or wisdom can you remember that your grandparents or older people in the church may have used?* One example is an older gentleman in one church was known for many witticisms, such as, “He who throws dirt loses ground.”

Say: Most of us have probably found ourselves inadvertently quoting our parents or grandparents as we have interacted with our own children. We may have even thought, *Oh no! I’m becoming my mother [or father]!* As we study today’s lesson, we are going to recognize the value of those who have influenced our lives and the privilege we have of influencing those who follow us. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Our perception of life changes dramatically as we move through the stages of adulthood. Young adults may look at their parents and grandparents and feel that it will be a very long time before they themselves will be at that stage. But, what will seem like a short time later, they will wonder how they got there already. God has a wonderful plan for all of these generations to interact with one another in a way that glorifies Him and builds His kingdom. Each must value the other as a vital part of the family of God.

Part 1—Teach Mutual Respect in the Family

Benefits of Honor and Love

Exodus 20:12; 1 Corinthians 16:14

Say: The Ten Commandments are foundational to right relationships with God and people. Keeping them promotes the common good, and goes a long way toward living as God desires and as a good neighbor. Of those that deal with human relationships, the only one to include a promise is the command to honor one's parents. Doing so can lead to a long, full life. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Life is better when all people are given the honor, respect, and love they are due. When children first learn to respect their parents, then respect for teachers and others in society comes more naturally. When children grow up with a reverence for God and His ways, they are more likely to have a personal relationship with Him.

Families that do not show honor, respect, and love to one another often struggle with behavior and attitude issues. While a lack of respect is troublesome for the well-being and stability in a home, the greater harm is the spiritual consequences as family members spiral into rebellion against God.

Relationships change over time. In the parent-child relationship, honor relates strongly to obedience until children reach adulthood. In the relationship between parents and adult children, honor involves showing respect for a parent's values, concerns, and welfare. The point at which this relationship pivots varies much among cultures.

Respect is taught best by modeling it, both with children and others. When children are disrespectful, they should be corrected in a manner that is respectful, but carries appropriate consequences. Parents also model respect in the way they interact with their own parents. If they view their aging parents as a burden or as not having a valued role in their lives, the children will adopt that same attitude. One of the rewards of early teaching is the friendship that comes with the adult child and parent relationship.

Discuss

? What are the benefits of teaching children to respect older adults in the family, church, and community?

? What advice would you offer parents with younger children that could help them teach their children to respect others?

Appreciate Your Spiritual Heritage

Scripture Reference 2 Timothy 1:5–6

Say: God does not have any grandchildren, but children are more likely to put their faith in the Lord if that faith is embraced by their parents and/or grandparents. Timothy came to know the Lord through the influence of his mother and grandmother, from whom he learned the Scriptures from his infancy (2 Timothy 3:15). When Paul met Timothy, he nurtured this young man in the

Christian faith. Timothy became a coworker with Paul in the ministry. Paul encouraged Timothy to steadfastness in his calling by reminding him of the spiritual heritage he had received from his mother and grandmother. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The importance of teaching children about faith in God and His ways was ingrained in Jewish society (Deuteronomy 6). Parents were to use the events of everyday living as “teachable moments.” Love for God was expressed in choosing to obey God’s Word in every aspect of life.

While each generation may express their faith differently, younger believers should appreciate and build on the spiritual foundation provided by their parents, grandparents, and spiritual mentors. Methods of teaching and worship expression may change, but the gospel message remains the same. Older believers should not dismiss new approaches just because they are different. Younger believers should not disparage the spiritual heritage they have received. Maturity can offer wisdom learned no other way than through years of walking with the Lord.

Parents and grandparents find no greater joy than to see their children and grandchildren grow up with a “genuine faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, NLT) in Christ and to see them serving Him.

Discuss

? Why does each generation need to learn from other generations?

? How can churches better facilitate communication and cooperation between younger and older believers?

Resource Packet Item 1: Max

Distribute the case study to students, then give them time to fill it out. Ask volunteers to share their responses as you lead the class in discussion.

Part 2—Respect and Care for Older Christians

Treat Others With Respect

1 Timothy 5:1–2

Say: Christianity is much more than another organized religion. Faith in Jesus Christ makes people part of God’s family. God expects that those who are part of His family will treat one another with respect. Paul’s advice to the young pastor, Timothy, was both for him and the church under his care. The same instructions are just as valid today as they were in the first century. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Believers are to treat older Christians as they would treat their father or mother. Those who are younger or similar in age are to be treated as a brother or sister. Some may question Paul’s instructions to Timothy in light of the poor family relationships so common in today’s society. However, these principles should be embraced as a reflection of God’s loving nature that is to be imitated in His people. Showing love for one another within the natural family and the family of God is a defining characteristic of those who follow Christ (John 13:34–35).

Younger people sometimes view those older than they are as old-fashioned and out of touch, dismissing them as useless. While older believers can be resistant to change and long for how things were, they have wisdom gained by experience. When older and younger work together, their choices will demonstrate zeal along with knowledge and better advance the cause of Christ.

It would be shortsighted to overlook Paul's charge to treat women of every age with purity (1 Timothy 5:2). In a sexually charged society, Christians—both men and women—should be aware of how they interact with members of the opposite sex. Purity refers to honorable conduct, both publicly and privately. Believers should leave no room for accusations of immoral or improper conduct, but should be known for treating one another with respect.

Discuss

? How can Christians set a good example in their treatment of others?

? How does showing respect affect relationships with others?

Care for Those Who Are Alone

1 Timothy 5:3–11

Say: Perhaps one of the most challenging benchmarks of the Christian faith is how believers treat those who are alone and have no one else to care for them. Paul's instructions to Timothy concerning the care of widows shines a spotlight on this truth. Believers who do not care for their family members deny the faith. Providing care is godly and pleases God. Those who are alone, who do not have children or grandchildren to care for them, are to receive assistance from the church. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Godly living reaps blessings. Note the qualities of a widow who should receive assistance: prayer warrior, faithful spouse, good mother, helper to others in need. Those who have faithfully served the Lord should be rewarded for their devotion to Christ.

James defined pure and genuine religion as caring for orphans and widows, and living a godly lifestyle (James 1:27). Paul's instructions to Timothy concerning care for believing widows shows that the Early Church took this responsibility seriously. They also reveal that at the core of the Christian faith is obedience to Christ's command to love one another (John 13:34–35). That love begins with caring for one's own family, especially those who are alone.

Notice that the first leaders selected by the church were chosen to oversee the care provided to the widows among them (Acts 6). Failure in this area could have resulted in division among believers and a loss of focus on the overall ministry of the church. Addressing the concern wisely led to needs being ministered to and the message of Jesus continuing to be spread.

How churches fulfill the responsibility to care for those who are alone will vary greatly. Some may have organized programs, while others may rely on the generosity of individuals or families in their churches to provide assistance. Many times providing care takes the form of spending time with an older adult or helping with tasks around the house.

Failing to care for those who have contributed so much for the sake of Christ is a blemish on any church and leaves it open to criticism from unbelievers. If believers do not take care of their own, why should unbelievers think they will be cared for? But when a church provides loving care for those who are alone, it is a powerful witness to the lost.

Resource Packet Item 2: Show You Care

Distribute the work sheet to students, and divide the class into small groups. Assign one Scripture passage to each group, then have the groups share their responses.

Discuss

? How might the church find ways to connect with those who are alone in the community?

? What are practical ways you (or your class) can assist widows and orphans?

Part 3—Finish Well

Remain Faithful

2 Timothy 4:6–8

Say: Second Timothy was likely the final book written by Paul at a time when he knew he was near the end of his life. He used vivid examples to describe his own life experiences. Like a boxer, he fought for the faith well, serving the Lord in good times and bad. Like a runner, he finished the race, in spite of struggles and setbacks. Like a steward, he was faithful to use what his Master had entrusted to him. As Paul faced death, he could be confident that he would receive the prize, the crown of righteousness. He knew righteousness came through faith in Christ and that in heaven he would “possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed” him (Philippians 3:12, NLT). That hope is what compels older believers to remain faithful and finish well. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Getting older brings with it challenges younger people often fail to understand. Believers can face these challenges with hope for their future and confidence in their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Discussing death can be difficult, even for believers. Yet the reality is that everyone dies. Believers who remain faithful have the confidence that they will be present with the Lord when they are absent from the body. This should be a source of comfort and strength. Often the only regret older believers express is they will miss being with the loved ones they leave behind. The hope of being reunited one day in heaven strengthens their resolve to keep fighting, keep running, and remain faithful.

Believers can express their confidence in their heavenly prize in the way they handle their end-of-life matters. Through estate planning they can practice what Jesus taught about laying up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19–21) as they provide for their loved ones and contribute to the work of the Kingdom.

Younger believers have a responsibility to care for and encourage older believers, especially when health issues prevent them from being involved in church activities. These older believers must not be overlooked, but ministered to through personal visits and assistance.

Discuss

? How can older believers be encouraged to finish well?

? What difference does the hope of heaven make in the way you live?

Resource Packet Item 3: Laying Up Treasure

Distribute the information sheet to students. Go over the information with them, and discuss any questions they may have. Younger students in your class may wish to discuss some of these options with their parents when the time is right.

Pass Along the Mantle

2 Kings 2:5–14

Say: One of the blessings of getting older is the opportunity to pass along one’s knowledge and wisdom to those who follow. For example, Elijah mentored Elisha to serve as a prophet. When God took Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind, Elisha was ready to step up and assume that mantle of responsibility and service. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Someone has said the church is only one generation away from extinction. While believers can be confident that Christ will build His Church, they must always stay aware that the next generation of leaders and workers need to be nurtured, trained, and mentored. Elijahs need Elishas, those who will take up the mantle of serving the Lord when those who have served faithfully are gone (2 Kings 2:5–14).

One area in particular that older believers can mentor younger believers in is the working of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be Pentecostal? How do believers learn to be used in the gifts of the Spirit? To be led by the Spirit? To cooperate with the Spirit in bearing His fruit in one’s life? Younger believers may need to be reminded that technology can be an amazing tool, yet the power of the Spirit to convict, regenerate, and transform lives must never be abandoned.

Sometimes older believers struggle to let go of an area of service to those who are younger. Seniors may be afraid changes will diminish the ministry or cause their own legacy to be forgotten. Older believers should remind themselves that they are serving the Lord and His Church. And perhaps they should recall how they felt when they were younger and took over a ministry from someone older. Rather than allowing any bad feelings or thoughts to take root, older believers should ask the Lord for a “double portion” of God’s Spirit on those who follow them and a bountiful harvest to the glory of God. May the waters be parted as the next generation carries on in the powerful anointing of the Spirit of God!.

Discuss

? How can older believers mentor younger believers while avoiding an “everything was better back in the good old days” mentality?

? In what areas, such as what it means to be Pentecostal, could older believers mentor younger believers?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Older Christians should be valued in their role within family relationships— both in the natural family and the church family. Older believers often have special opportunities to nurture children who support the efforts of parents. When mutual respect is practiced in the home, children learn to respect others outside the home. God expects His people to show respect and care for older Christians. To fail to do so is a denial of the Christian faith, for the character of God is to care for those who are alone. Younger believers are to provide moral and spiritual support to older believers to help them finish well. The challenges of old age can be a trial. Older believers may need assistance to keep fighting the good fight.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Do something to acknowledge the value of older Christians in your life, such as sending them a card or having them join you for a meal. Share how they have encouraged you in your faith.
- Express gratitude to an older adult for the role he or she plays in your family. Find creative ways to get your whole family involved.
- Build into your schedule time to visit older Christians, especially those who are alone or in a care facility. Listen and learn from their stories.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

God's Covenant With Aged Noah.
Genesis 9:8–17

Tuesday:

A Senior Champion.
Joshua 14:6–14

Wednesday:

Folly of Rejecting Elder Wisdom.
1 Kings 12:12–19

Thursday:

Lifelong Devotion.
Luke 2:25–38

Friday:

Wise Counsel for Seniors.
Titus 2:1–5

Saturday:

Faithful in Later Years.
Hebrews 11:13–16