

Growing Old Gracefully, God's Way!

Aging and Geriatric Issues Individual Counseling

Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. – **Psalm 71:18**



Many people are surprised to learn that the term “Golden Age” was coined in 1959 for an advertising campaign for one of America’s first nursing homes. People believed that retirement was a time to spend leisure time and do things that brought them joy.

The Bible does not hide the downsides of aging, and neither should we. But aging does not mean God no longer has a purpose for us. Realizing the futility of life without God, be encouraged even from an early age to surrender your life to God. Not only does God give meaning and joy to our lives now, but if we wait too long, it will be late to enjoy God’s good gifts.

God calls us to remember our Maker in our youth before days of trouble come. The Bible is full of examples of elderly people who refused to use age as an excuse. It is not always easy, but we can improve the lives of ourselves (and those who care for us) by trying to age.

The Bible mentions aging well and wisely.

Many older people fight against aging, but aging has many benefits. Every day you wake up with more knowledge than yesterday. Your wisdom helps you connect with those who came before you, but it also makes you an inspiration to young people. As you approach your golden years, set aside your fears and remember what the Bible says about aging well.

God loves you.

God promises to be with you from birth to the last day. In Isaiah 46:4, he said, “I will be your God all the days of your life, until you turn gray as you get older,” adding, “I created you, and I will take care of you.” Even if you are stressed or tired, God is with you, and you are never alone. God will not abandon you and will tirelessly help you grow in his image. His work will not be finished as long as you live.

Elders are wise.



When we connect with our elders, we can gain wisdom. We will learn more about ourselves, God, our loved ones, and the world around us. The Bible states that we should respect our elders.

In Job 32:4, however, Elihu waited for Job to finish speaking to express his criticism because he thought it was appropriate to do so at such a young age. Aging becomes meaningful and even joyful when we recognize and hope for an eternal inheritance while gratefully fulfilling our earthly purpose while at the same time drawing near to God.

Discomfort is temporary.

When we get older, our bodies get tired, and we experience pain. Young and old will need help making choices. Elders can still be taught the joy of serving the Lord to understand their purpose. Some of the ways Christian elders can help others or resurrect their purpose include:

- Volunteer at a food bank/shelter.
- Read the Bible to/teach children at Sunday School.
- Become a teacher in a local community or primary school.
- Community clean-ups.
- Deliver food for other seniors.
- Sending cards to the military or others that are sick/shut-in.
- Weaving scarves or blankets for people experiencing homelessness or the sick.

Do something good every day, even if you are volunteering in your area is unavailable. Invite new residents in your community or write a short note to a friend to express your gratitude. Get involved in a church or help neighbors in need. You can have influence at any age.

Getting old is a blessing; seniors can make the most of every day. From art and music classes to yoga classes and spiritual activities, you can have the tools to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle. While we

may all meet with loss, disability, decline, and eventually death, this does not have to be a one-way, dreaded trip.

Let's discuss another piece of the aging process that needs to be discussed: midlife.

What does midlife/middle age mean?

Recent research by "Midlife in the US" illustrates that midlife presents fertile ground for the growing of new brain cells and renewed well-being.

While we have some work to do as a society to adjust our expectations and provide opportunities for purposeful participation beyond midlife, it is good to know that if we build a more suitable foundation with meaningful roles and opportunities for generative leadership, we can enliven and enrich our growing up. We can even become a resource for society. Change is the way of life. And the middle is always the most potent.



We are a part of nature. And nature is ever-changing, never staying the same. This process can be challenging for some of us. This may be a reason we hold on to the idea that there is a grown-up peak to achieve, where nothing changes, and we get to stay the same. The happily ever after narrative may be an answer to our fears of uncertainty.

Those of us in middle age are dwelling within the broadest and perhaps deepest stage of our life. It is considered a pivotal period because we are often simultaneously responsible for the young and the old and find ourselves in a time of great transition, not unlike the adolescent years when the body, mind, and emotions all transform at once.

But being in the middle is a great place to be. It is the best part of a good story. That time of suspense when we do not know what is coming next. With life span theory, we are always in the middle. We are always becoming. Growing up is not a destination but a way of being. An active process of letting go and moving on.

Our life is divided into sections: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. However, there is a gap from around the age of fifty. It is as if a veil has been lifted in middle age, blurring our goals. Still, this is a big part of life, perhaps the most significant part. For many years, the middle stages of life received little interest or attention from researchers and psychotherapists. For others, treating middle-aged adults psychologically meant processing their regrets, grieving the loss, and preparing for further losses.

Retirement planning, downsizing, and liquidation are the usual goals. This scenario has a small future. Sigmund Freud believed that the brain and personality are fixed and do not change after adolescence. This can be challenged because of wisdom. Later in life, the brain shrinks, and degeneration can occur.

However, older people may acquire greater wisdom based on lifelong experience. Some researchers have suggested that brain circuits associated with emotional processing and moral decision-making may involve different elements of wisdom, but this research still needs to be completed.

We unconsciously use words like decline, downhill, faded, invisible, obsolete, and even retired to indicate a particular direction in our life plans. The inevitable slippage is natural, so we should embrace it. Lifespan Theory provides us with the idea of continuous development. In lifespan theory, we are never fixed. Instead, we continue to evolve more gradually.

Growing up is not linear; a one-time chance that works, and aging is not just a descent into oblivion. The function of memory is to help us in the future, protect us, remember us, and guide us. As we create our future selves, we encounter parts of our past that we have forgotten or left behind. We can look back on history and start the artistic process of discovering new paths with goals and dreams. Middle age is dynamic and ever-changing.

Aging is an interacting process; just because your golden year is approaching does not mean you are not still young. Everyone experiences aging differently. There is no one-size-fits-all term that covers the full range of experiences. Language fails here. Words have power; focusing on individuals rather than concepts is more important. How we relate to our loved ones, our communities, and the world around us is up to us.

How to accept aging.



Aging only happens in stages. It is a gradual onset, from the first gray hair to the creaking of our joints. But how we deal with aging determines whether we can accept the aging process.

It helps to have positive role models, such as parents and family members, who are optimistic as they age. If we do not have a family to model for, we can choose someone full of inspiration, like Queen Elizabeth, who never stopped working or giving back despite her advanced age.

Stay active.

One of the best ways to combat aging is to stay mentally and physically active in retirement. Exercise is a great way to feel good and stay active. Focus on exercises such as walking and swimming that improve flexibility, strength, and balance.

Stay social.

Stay social by joining a book club, volunteering, or playing games. Scrabble, crossword puzzles, and card games are great ways to keep your mind sharp and can even improve your memory and mental performance.

Stay learning.

Attending classes and learning new things like languages and gardening can also help you age gracefully and become a new chapter in a fulfilling life and God's purpose as we age.

Would you like some to talk to about aging? Stephen Ministers are especially trained to come alongside you to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support. Talking about the process of aging is one

area they can be especially helpful. There are several ways to make arrangements to talk to a Stephen Minister.

(1) One way is to complete this confidential Stephen Ministry form. Bob Bohler or Deb Williams will then contact you.

OR

(2) Call directly: Pastor Bob Bohler (706-549-9284) or Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator Deb Williams (706-247-9000).