

Finishing Well
Gary Kirksey
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Psalms 71:17-18 David's goal when he was old was to pass on knowledge of God to younger generations.

Leviticus 19:32 & Genesis 25:8 show that old age meant a person had experience and wisdom and was to be honored, but in our culture youth is more highly valued.

- What is your attitude toward older people?

Ecclesiastes 12: 1-7 teaches us that we should start well, that we should honor God in our youth.

What do you need to do in order to age well?

1. Keep a whole hearted faith.

Caleb is our example. In Numbers 13:30, he and Joshua were the only two spies who had seen the promised land who believed God would enable them to take it. Ten others were fearful. In Joshua 14: 7-14, Caleb is 85 years old and still strong in his faith.

Current studies show that optimistic people who are full of faith are much more likely to live longer than negative people.

- How would you rate the strength of your faith? If you have been a believer for several years, would you say your faith is becoming stronger with time?

2. Stay challenged.

In Joshua 14:10-12, when the 85 year old Caleb is speaking, he asks to fight the Anakites who lived in the mountains in cities with strong walls around them. This would have been the most difficult tribe to conquer.

Marian Diamond, a prominent expert on brain research, writes, "In terms of successful aging, it is not enough to continue activities in the same groove year after year with the same expenditure of mental and physical energy. The brain requires new challenges if it is to remain a healthy, functioning organ."

- How do you view difficult tasks? Is it your tendency to volunteer for them or to avoid them? What emotion would you have if faced with a major change in your life, such as a career change, a huge physical or spiritual challenge, a move where you'll have to establish new relationships, etc.? How is this related to the strength of your faith?

3. Be in community.

Caleb's generation, the generation of those that left Egypt with him all died out. That means Caleb, as an older man, had to develop a whole new circle of friends. He had to become mentor, guide, and cheer leader for an entirely new generation.

In doing experiments on lab rats, Marian Diamond found that they lived longer when living in groups of 12 than when in isolation. Further experiments found that adding physical stroking or love significantly increased their life expectancy even more. Their brains continued to develop and become stronger as well.

- Do you have relationships with those outside your generation? What do you enjoy about that? What is difficult about it? What could you do to learn from and bless someone who is older or younger than you?