

Honoring the Aged Among Us

By Doug Hamilton

We have been covering the family relationships over the past few weeks. We have had numerous lessons on marriage, several others on parenting as well as a couple on the church family. In the final lesson, I would like to cover something that is and always has been near and dear to my heart. To close this series on the Family, I would like to cover "Honoring the Aged".

I do not know if you are aware of the fact that abuse of the elderly has been on an incredible increase past the last few decades.

- According to the best available estimates, between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depended for care or protection.
- Data on elder abuse in domestic settings suggest that 1 in 14 incidents, excluding incidents of self-neglect, come to the attention of authorities.
- Current estimates put the overall reporting of financial exploitation at only 1 in 25 cases, suggesting that there may be at least 5 million financial abuse victims each year.
- It is estimated that for every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self neglect reported to authorities, about five more go unreported.
- In 2003, state Long Term Care Ombudsman programs nationally investigated 20,673 complaints of abuse, gross neglect, and exploitation on behalf of nursing home and board and care residents. Among seven types of abuse categories, physical abuse was the most common type reported.

(Statistics from the National Center on Elder Abuse in Washington D.C.

http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/ncearoot/Main_Site/pdf/publication/FinalStatistics050331.pdf)

I am persuaded, as thousands of others, as our nation has neglected the religion of Christianity and her values, so goes our behavior toward the elderly. This has always been one of the signs of a nation in decline. Before the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah, the Bible states in *Lam 5:12* "...elders were not respected." Before the nation of Israel divided and had civil war for over a century, Rehoboam lacked respect for the advice of the wise and experienced elders. They recommended lessening the heavy burden on the people left by his father Solomon.

IKing 12:7-11 Then they {the elders} spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, will serve them, grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him. 9 So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'" 10 And the young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins! 11 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your

Honoring the Aged Among Us

By Doug Hamilton

yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

Every civilization that has ever fallen showed a direct correlation with how that society interacted with the elderly. When a nation neglects and rejects the elderly that are among them, that society's existence will be shortened and/or eradicated. On the other hand when a nation reveres and honors the aged, it can cause an abundance of blessings for all in that community. Here are but a few of the marvelous benefits of the elderly.

We honor the aged for the sake of Reverence.

The Bible states in *Lev 19:32* *'You shall rise up before the grayheaded, and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.* God requires us as a people of His own possession to be zealous for His good works. This is absolutely inclusive to the honoring the aged. The word for *honor* means *to show favor and importance toward another*. It is not something that happens by accident, but through re-evaluation and re-application. When we "rise up" before the aged and treat them as important and favored, we are reverencing God in the way that He has called for us to do.

- He is the One that picked the day of their birth, not us.
- He is the One that has allowed them to store up the experiences of life in abundance, not us.
- He is the One that made them in the likeness and image of Him, not us.
- He is the One that has kept their hearts pumping and the lungs breathing and their arms moving and their legs walking and their eyes seeing and their minds thinking, not us, but HIM!!!

The Bible states in *Ps 111:9* *He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name. (KJV)* It is not about us, but HIM!!!

The more seasoned citizens of heaven can be a tool in demonstrating reverence to God. They are an important and valuable way to God's heart, whether you want to recognize it or not. We honor the aged for the sake of REVERENCE to God.

We honor the aged for the sake of Wisdom.

The elderly in a congregation are the greatest vessels of wisdom that we can tap into as a church family. With years of life there usually is years of accumulated experience.

- Job 12:12 "Wisdom is with aged men, {with} long life is understanding.
- Job 32:7 "I thought age should speak, and increased years should teach wisdom.
- Prov 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is their gray hair.

As many of you know, I did not grow up in a home that offered good guidance. Many of the lessons that I have learned in life came at the expense of trial and error. Many other lessons were learned from my peer's failures in life. I constantly tried to find good sources of wisdom to live by, but it was tough. It always seemed that whenever a good

Honoring the Aged Among Us

By Doug Hamilton

source of wisdom came into my life, either death or relocation or distractions of the world would take them out of my grasp. It was not until I found Christ and the church that I was blessed with a great abundance of wisdom.

- I called the preacher nearly everyday following my conversion. I wanted to know what he knew and more.
- One of the elders of the congregation became and remains one of my friends and mentors to this day.
- When I went to Sunset School of Preaching, I was surrounded by many older Christians full of wisdom. Some were called teachers, some elders and others were called preachers. I learn much.
- At my first work there were men like Roscoe Imhoff and Dale Bonnett. I spent many, many hours a month with them doing the work of the church.
- No matter where you go, the church is the greatest source of wisdom and the older Christians are the greatest source, even in Camp Hill.
 - ❖ It was through Paul Cantrell with whom I have learned to be a better planner.
 - ❖ It was through older women like Ann Bower and Francis Sheetz that I have learned to remember a down to earth approach to fellowship.
 - ❖ It was through Bob Williams I have learned the wisdom of not jumping to hasty conclusions.
 - ❖ It was through Jane Patrick that I have learned the value of a solid Bible education at a young age.
 - ❖ I have had great experiences simply visiting with Bernice, Arlene, Warren and Faynelle, Rita, Eddy and many others of the like.

There are so many sources of good information that we would be foolish not to tap into them. We honor the aged for the sake of WISDOM.

We honor the aged for the sake of Fellowship.

It does not matter what century that the church has existed concerning generational gaps. I always get a kick out of the people that buy into those labels like “Baby Boomers”, “Generation Y” or “Post-modern”. I am of the “Generation Jones” group because I guess I am supposed to keep up with the Jones??? I actually had an all-wise brother of the “Post-modern, Generation X” group (born after 1980) tell me there is a huge lack of communication between them and the “GI Generation” of 1925-1945 and the “Baby Boomers” of 55 to 64. He said “They just don’t understand us.” He went on to say that since I was born in 1965, one year past the “Baby-boomers”, that he could better relate to me. I thought to myself...WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT AND WHERE ARE YOU GETTING THIS???

That is what I like about the older folks, because the Bible clearly identifies that the pattern of fellowship begins with them. They are to be looked up to and honored regardless of whatever generation we are in.

Honoring the Aged Among Us

By Doug Hamilton

- 1 Tim 5:1-2 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but {rather} appeal to {him} as a father, {to} the younger men as brothers, 2 the older women as mothers, {and} the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

Having been to many places in the world, I really love how they carry out this in Western Africa. When someone is of a ripe old age, they are looked to as a source of honor, judgment and guidance. The younger are not seeking to flee from the elderly, but embracing them as an ever-improving resource of the community. They do not go to the younger people of the group to gain direction, but to the oldest. The people in these countries commonly call the older men “Dad” and the older women “Mom”, just like the Bible describes; while in this country we have kids calling their own parents by their first name and worse!

If you want the fellowship of the congregation to take off like a rocket, HONOR THE AGED. If you want to have the greatest unity afforded us, HONOR THE ELDERLY. The young might be saying, “I don’t know what to say?” Just HONOR them by spending some time with them. Listen to them. Learn from them. We honor the aged for the sake of FELLOWSHIP.

We honor the aged for the sake of Righteousness.

Peter says of new Christians in *1 Pet 2:2* “...like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...” Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians in *1 Cor 3:1-3* “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able {to receive it.} Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly.” When a baby is born into a family, he takes time to grow. There will be many spit-ups, soiled diapers and baby steps early on, but through the course of time, the baby becomes a child, then a teenager and finally a fully mature adult.

Peter and Paul are reminding the Christian that we are born-again into Christ and have a need to grow as well. We will trip p in our unrighteousness, get up and with the leadership of the mature, press-on. Ultimately it is the relationships of those that are more mature that will bring the newborn in Christ to a new level of growth. Honoring the aged brings about righteousness in the lives of the young.

- Prov 16:31 A gray head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness.
- Titus 2:2-8 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 {to be} sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, {with} purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound {in}

Honoring the Aged Among Us

By Doug Hamilton

speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

I am convinced that this generation of babes will not reach the level of righteousness that God wants them to be at until they reverse the course and begin to bring great honor to the lives of the elderly. The first group of "Elderly" would be parents. *Eph 6:2-3 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.* From there the honor must be transferred to the even older members, like grandparents and others of that generation in the church. We honor the aged for the sake of RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The Lonely Widow

A few years back when my oldest son Adam was about fifteen, he purchased his first motorized vehicle, a moped. Naturally he was excited about it and found himself driving all over the small rural town that I was preaching in. As any father would naturally be apprehensive about his offspring cruising the roads among cars, I kept a close eye on him to make sure he was staying out of trouble. One early evening he was out past dark, something I did not want him doing; and I went out to find where he may have gone. Being a bit peeved and driving around our small town in search of him, I found his moped parked out in front of one the home of one of the widow's of our congregation. Still being a bit upset about him not returning as expected, I went up to the door and was about to knock when I saw him through the window. He was sitting on the chair next to the widow, talking, listening and laughing along with her. For the next couple of minutes I admired a son that was spiritually socializing with a lonely widow sixty years his senior. He had used his little moped to take the time to drive over and honor the aged. I quietly returned to my car, not wanting to spoil the moment.

Too many times we do not take the time to encourage the elderly in the ways that we could. If you are under the age of thirty, look around at the congregation and ask yourself these questions:

- "How many of these wonderful senior saints do I have a personal relationship with?"
- "Have I taken the time to honor these seniors with a visit in their homes or at the hospital?"
- "Have I gone out of my way to pray for them, write them an encouraging card or eaten a meal together with them?"
- "Have I sat and listened to their stories of the past and gleaned through their years of wisdom?"

They will not be with us long and everyday that goes by without honoring them is a huge missed opportunity to grow in our reverence for God, strengthen the fellowship. Increase in our wisdom and improve in our righteousness. Take advantage of it today while there is still an opportunity.