

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Aging

Joshua 14:6–14; Psalm 90



LET'S BEGIN HERE

No series on godly priorities would be complete without addressing the issue of those who are growing older: “senior citizens,” as they are commonly called. All too frequently, however, this particular group is given the message: “You are finished . . . you really do not figure that highly in our future.” Although this is a familiar philosophy within the ranks of humanity, Scripture does not support this view, either in philosophy or practice. The man whose life we unveil today exemplifies God’s desire for the aged. Caleb remained forever young, even though he had every reason to back off, fade into oblivion, and give up with a long, heavy sigh as he snuggled down into a bed of moth balls. No way! As we shall observe, Caleb stayed in the mainstream—in fact, on the front edge of new and fresh challenges.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Erroneous Attitudes on Aging

Before we look at the Bible’s positive perspective on aging, let’s understand several negative attitudes held by those who struggle with getting old.

- *Uselessness*: Too many men and women believe that, as members of a long-gone era, they don’t fit into today’s world. They look at their lives as rusty relics rather than treasure troves of insight gathered from a wide array of experiences.
- *Guilt*: Some older folks look back over their lives feeling a burden of guilt. The pictures hanging on memory’s walls line a haunted house instead of a beautiful art gallery.
- *Self-Pity*: Falling somewhere between blame and bitterness, self-pity cries out, “Nobody cares about me anymore.” Self-pity banishes a person to solitary confinement rather than spurring one toward new freedom and involvement.
- *Fear*: Many older folks fear trying to survive in a world that’s moving too fast. Others fear the specter of fading health. Or being alone. Or becoming dependent. And the gray drizzle of fear overcasts the present, which still pulses with promise.



Quotable

“Don’t just pretend to love each other; really love people.”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. God's Attitude Toward Aging (Joshua 14:1–25; Psalm 90)

Let's see what God has to say about aging, first through a psalm of Moses and then through the life of Caleb.

Psalm 90 records an ancient song the elderly Moses sang to the Lord. This psalm sums up our lives on earth—we sprout, we wither, we die. But, the value of life isn't measured by the number of our years but by the quality of our days—not how long we live, but *how* we live. In this psalm, Moses prayed for the best use of his life, however long it may last. So the principle we can glean from Psalm 90 is this: *Since every day is a gift from God, live each one enthusiastically for Him.*

In Joshua 14, we find a man who embodied enthusiastic living and trust in God. As Joshua started to divide the newly conquered Promised Land among the Israelites, Caleb, an 85-year-old man, spoke up. Caleb recalled his faithfulness to the Lord as a spy many years before (Numbers 13–14) and requested the hill country of Israel—the place where the giants lived who had scared away ten of the spies many years before. Even as an old man, Caleb still trusted the Lord and had the courage to fight for Him. So God blessed Caleb the rest of his days (Joshua 14:13–14).



A CLOSER LOOK

An Old Man's Courage

"Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully." —Joshua 14:8

The time had finally come! Many years earlier, God had promised to reward Caleb for his faith, and it was time to claim his inheritance. Moses had sent twelve men, one from each tribe, to survey the land so they could make arrangements to take it over (Numbers 13). Caleb, a gutsy leader, represented the tribe of Judah. Ten of the spies discouraged the Israelites from marching into the Promised Land; only Caleb and Joshua urged the people to step out in faith, believing in God's promise to give them Canaan despite the obstacles. Caleb serves as an example of an encourager. An encourager is a person who knows God's promises, believes that He is faithful, and inspires others with the courage to trust the Lord. As Christians who have received forgiveness and eternal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, we should be the most encouraging people around!



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LET'S LIVE IT

None of us can avoid aging. There is no fountain of youth. So how should we respond to the inevitable process of aging? We should:

- View life as a challenge, *not* a threat
- Follow the Lord fully, *not* half-heartedly

We must remember that there is a Fountain of Living Water and, thanks to Him, we can drink up all this life has to offer—even in our old age!

How are you handling the process of aging? Do you know anyone who needs a ray of hope in the darkness of old age? How can you provide some light?



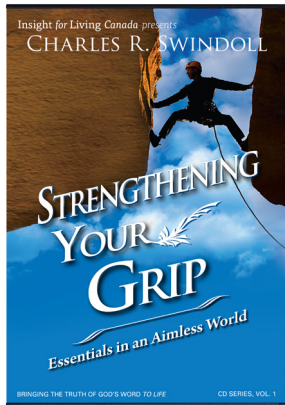
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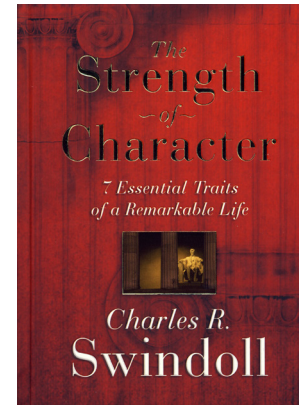
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