

MARRIAGE: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

STUDY EIGHT

Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14

There's something delightful and carefree about being young. My question is: why must that stop? Where's the culprit who passed the edict that growing older is a plague? It isn't your age. It's your attitude. The secret of staying young as we add up the years rests within us and nobody else. It's attitude, and that's a choice.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SOMEONE once said, “None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.”¹ Sadly, this describes the experience of many who find the sun setting on their own lives. Though many search for purpose as the light of life fades, few find enjoyment in growing old.

Some adopt an attitude of uselessness as they age, focusing on years gone by instead of looking to what's ahead. Or they experience self-pity, wondering whether anyone cares about them anymore. Many live out their final days with a fear of death. Not to mention how easy it is to reflect on a long life, letting mistakes and failures overshadow moments of success and joy.

But . . . God offers a different way.

No person can control all the circumstances he or she faces. But anyone can control how to *respond* to a circumstance. Those who choose to have a good attitude can face down even the most devastating of circumstances with spiritual confidence and optimism.

The Israelite Caleb lived eighty-five arduous years. He spent much of his life as a slave under the oppressive Egyptians. He wandered in the wilderness for decades. He watched the Canaanites murder his fellow Israelites in battle. *If anyone should have outlived enthusiasm, it was Caleb.*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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This *Searching the Scriptures* study will explore the example of Caleb, the elder statesman, to consider how he managed to stay young and maintain enthusiasm even as he neared his last days. God used this man to display how someone can choose a good attitude amid dire situations.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer is the hotline, the joy-line, the strength-line, the love-line, the guidance-line . . . the *lifeline* that connects everyone—young and old alike—to God. Bible study is incomplete without it. So, take time to pray to God before you begin. Ask to encounter Him in new ways, and then keep your praying going throughout your study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Joshua tells the story of the Israelites experiencing victory in the promised land because of their trust in God's promises. The opening verses of the book introduce this theme. Read *Joshua 1:2–3*, and summarize the promise God made to Joshua.

The rest of the narrative tells of the Israelites who neglected to believe in the God who brought His people out of captivity. And just as God promised, these people did not inherit the land. As the story progresses, it introduces others, however, who held unwavering trust in their God, and God blessed these people richly. One such person was a man named Caleb.



Observation: The Youthful Elder

When Pastor Chuck Swindoll studies the Bible, he always starts by reading the passage and asking, “What does this passage say?” As a detective looks carefully at every detail of a case, a student of Scripture also must closely examine every detail of a passage. One of the most important clues to understanding is *repetition*.



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Joshua 14:6–14

In *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck writes: “A repetition . . . means, ‘This is important!’ Often the repetition is intended to build to a climax.”² Read *Joshua 14:6–14*, and look carefully for repeated phrases.

Caleb’s Recollection—Joshua 14:6–9

In Joshua 14:6–7, Caleb recalls a story from the time when Israel first approached the land of Canaan after their escape from Egypt. According to *14:8*, how did those who explored the land of Canaan react to what they saw? How did Caleb’s response differ?

According to *14:9*, what promise did Moses make to Caleb? Why?

Caleb followed the Lord God of Israel fully. That’s the secret. To him, the Lord was his partner. He was the source of strength. He was the reason for the positive spirit. He was the reason he could look above decisions made by someone else and say, “God’s hand is in this.” His eyes weren’t on himself. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14

Caleb's Request—Joshua 14:10–14

How did Caleb describe himself in *Joshua 14:10–11*?

What request did Caleb make of Joshua in *14:12*?

According to *14:13–14*, how did Joshua respond to Caleb's request? Why?

Three times this passage says that Caleb “wholeheartedly followed God.” His devotion to the Lord and confidence in the Lord motivated him throughout his entire life and fueled his enthusiasm to the very end. What an example!



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14



Interpretation: The Example of Caleb's Enthusiasm

The interpretation phase of Bible study looks more closely at this story about Caleb to see what timeless truths the narrative contains in his example of faith and enthusiasm—even as an old man.

The book of Joshua is a story about God's *faithfulness* to His promises and Israel's *faith* in those promises. How does *Joshua 14:6–14* reveal that God kept His promises to His people? How does Caleb demonstrate his faith in these promises?

What kind of attitude did Caleb show throughout this passage? How is this instructive for those who trust in Jesus today?

Maybe it's time for an attitude adjustment. Maybe it's time for us to take an attitude like Caleb's. It was an attitude of fortitude. An attitude of gratitude. An attitude of faith. A "can do" spirit. The majority of others around him said, "We can't." He said, "We can." They said, "We ought not." He said, "We must." They said, "It's impossible." He said, "There is no such word with God." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14



Correlation: The Faithful Youth

Caleb displayed wholehearted devotion to God not just at the *end* of his life but for his *entire* life. In [Numbers 13:25–33](#), Caleb’s faith and enthusiasm were evident decades before he and Joshua had conquered the land. These events set the backdrop for the drama of Joshua 14:9–14.

Summarize the report the spies gave to Moses in [Numbers 13:27–29](#) about the land of Canaan. Be sure to discuss both the positive and negative aspects they addressed.

According to [13:30–31](#), how did Caleb’s reaction to the report differ from that of the rest of the spies?

According to this passage, how did Caleb show that he “wholeheartedly followed God” even in his youth?



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14

Caleb didn't simply wake up on his eighty-fifth birthday with a new sense of faith in God and an enthusiasm for His purposes. Rather, he cultivated these attributes in his youth, allowing them to grow throughout his lifetime. Caleb's character reveals that, no matter one's age, it's never too late to adopt an attitude of enthusiasm and fortitude.

Application: Maintaining Youthful Enthusiasm

As Pastor Chuck reflects on the life of Caleb, he draws out four application principles that both younger and older people would be wise to heed.

1. *Your mind is not old. Keep stretching it!*
2. *Your life is not over. Keep enjoying it!*
3. *Your strength is not gone. Keep developing it!*
4. *Your opportunities have not vanished. Keep pursuing them!*

Have you felt your once-youthful attitude of enthusiasm for and devotion to Jesus Christ slipping away in recent years? In what ways? Is there some circumstance, relationship, or perspective shift that has led you to have this less-than-positive attitude?



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14

Growth is not for the young only. Rather, Christians should grow in Christlikeness from the moment they trust Jesus until their dying breaths. In what practical ways do you sense God calling you to grow in your walk with Him? What can you do to rekindle the embers of enthusiasm?

Proverbs 16:31 says, “Gray hair is a crown of glory.” Aging provides a person with a treasure trove of benefits: knowledge, experience, wisdom, long-term relationships. How can you use the blessing of age, as well as the gifts God has cultivated within you, to serve Jesus Christ?

An attitude like Caleb’s awaits us all—an attitude of positivity, an attitude of determination, confidence, and spiritual resilience. Caleb embraced a timeless mind-set that made his devotion to God evergreen. It’s never too late, and no one is too old to have a fiery devotion to Jesus Christ.



Staying Young as Your Family Grows Older

Joshua 14:6–14



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the example of the heroes of faith whose lives You've presented in Scripture. Though I may be growing older, help me have an enthusiastic attitude like Caleb's. My deepest desire is to serve You passionately to the very end so I can hear You say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Quotation commonly attributed to Henry David Thoreau.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 100.

