

2. **Clear your conscience.** Don't harbor unresolved issues that will create worrisome trouble for you both now and later. You can tell the people who have done that, whether they are young or old. Cain is an illustration. His hidden sin caused his countenance to fall and led to awful consequences. If you are a believer, carrying unresolved sin is a burden unfit for you. Call the family in and admit your failures, repay what was stolen, ask forgiveness for your attitudes and actions, settle accounts with your associates, your family, your church. Christ has forgiven you of your sins if you are His, now you must forgive, make restitution if appropriate, and ask for the forgiveness of others. If you don't do so, you will need to examine if you are a believer at all. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive others, neither will the Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:15).
3. **Put love first.** Believers are loving people on their way to an inheritance of love. Show it. Jesus and the authors of the New Testament all testify to the supreme place of love in the life of true believers. It is the mark of maturity, the royal law, the perfect bond of unity. It is above all, and is the law of Christ. The older I get the more I realize that everything can be summarized in the word "love." Loving God and loving others is the will of God for you. You should be better at it as you get older. It's your full time occupation, and it might be all you can do later. But you must begin demonstrating more of that love *now*. Aren't you glad God didn't only love in His thoughts. No, He "*demonstrated* his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Love is to be lived. You wear it as well as feel it. Be the most loving person you could possibly be, beginning right now.
4. **Be a giver.** There is little so joyful and helpful as giving. It is just like God who "so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16). Here is a little clue: giving is satisfying in ways that hoarders never will experience. I once knew a woman who could not let you leave her house without giving you something. Once, looking all around for something to put in our hands, she was only able to find a can opener. But we prized it because it came from a heart of love. Who would not want to be around people like her. But she was the real recipient, enjoying God's favor. Be open-handed with your time, money, and things. You will never get rid of all that junk you own unless you get started giving now.
5. **Don't quit serving.** One of the most often heard phrases in the church is "I feel I ought to let the younger people do it." Though I sympathize with the need to employ all of our people in the ministries of the church, the idea of marginalizing older people just when they get more time to serve Christ and His church is poorly thought through. It is true that older people might find it wise to shift their focus or to take a different role in their service to the people of God, but that is a very different thing than quitting. Be gracious when the leaders suggest that you step down from a ministry, but don't take it personally. They are doing the best they can to figure out how to use people the right way. Don't become bitter about it. Do something else that is fitting your stage in life and do it with all your heart. Be an example of gracious service to God. God's people don't retire, but they do take different assignments.

6. **Be an example of faithfulness.** Loyalty to church and to friends is in short supply these days. You can rectify that. Be as faithful to the gatherings and activities of the church as is physically possible. If you cannot drive, don't feel badly about asking someone to pick you up. You can help cover their gasoline, or you can take them out to eat at times to show your gratefulness. Be there even in the evening when most old folks sink into their easy chairs. What better place is there to be than in the fellowship of other believers? It will cheer your spirits, when slouching in the recliner will depress you. Teach the younger ones that they should pay any price to be with other believers.

Well, there is a start at being a great old person. I hope you will do this and more. If you've been grinding to a standstill in your love for others and your service for God, it's not too late to repent and to get with it.

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Preparing to Be an Amazing Old Man or Woman

Jim Elliff

Like it or not, if you continue to live, you'll get old. As you look around at all those ancient people in the grocery store, the golf



course, the retirement village and the nursing home, don't be smug—you'll be there soon enough. It will do you well to prepare to make those years the best they can be for the glory of God.

It's not uncommon for God to use older people. Take Caleb who fought giants as an octogenarian. Or Moses, who led a cantankerous people up to the promised land at 120. Remember Anna, the widow, who served God with prayers at the temple in Jerusalem. God delights in

doing this, because it makes clear that the power for living and doing the will of God isn't found in mere human capacity, but in God Himself. Is it possible that God could use you even more in your latter years than in the earlier ones? There is nothing to say otherwise, as far as God is concerned.

Here are some suggestions:

1. **Learn the Bible as well as possible while you can read and think well.** When you come to the latter years, you are supposed to be wise. Now, please tell me, how can you be wise without thinking God's thoughts? Impossible. Get them now. And be rigorous about it. Most older believers will tell you that it is those passages of Scripture that they memorized or studied deeply that have stuck with them in the hard times. You should have as much in your mental pouch for difficult days as possible. Do it now.