

## Shelved or Serving in the Latter Years?

Jim Elliff

Can you do much for God and his kingdom when you get old? God thinks so. He has used many older people to accomplish valuable kingdom work, recorded colorfully in both the Bible and Christian history.



Take Moses. He was 40 when he killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian. After he watched sheep for 40 more years, at 80, God called him to lead the children of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. Add to that another 40 years in the wilderness with the disobedient Israelites before God buried him in the Moab mountains at 120! His most important years were from 80-120!

There are three great truths to be gained from this old man's life:

### **1. God can take a long time to prepare us for important ministry in the kingdom, leaving our most meaningful work for our latter years.**

Moses' preparation for ministry took 80 years. God thought the preparation for his work was immensely significant and so he took care to build patience and character, and toughness, for the work he designed for him to do. Old people who love Christ should get excited about this prospect. We likely won't know what all those years are to result in while we are living them. Yet God can make it plain when the time comes. We should live optimistically realizing that there is reason to believe God can use us powerfully in the days ahead.

### **2. God is able to give us the mental and physical ability to work throughout our latter years if he wishes.**

It's all about what God wills for our lives, and that is true regardless of age. But Moses is one example of how God can give all we need to handle the rigors and stress of leadership throughout our old age if he wishes.

George Muller was also like that. This servant of God who fed and clothed over 10,000 orphans by faith in Bristol, England, tried to be a missionary five times as a young man. God did not allow it to happen. Then, at age 70 he struck out on long treks around the globe preaching the gospel and strengthening churches until 87 years of age! Some trips were as long as two years! This was in the late 1800s, when modern conveniences were scarce and travel modes were more difficult. God kept him going for this important ministry in his old age.

The truth is, for many older people, their ambition withers before their mental and physical abilities do. Without vision, an older person can close the door prematurely to what may be their greatest contribution to the Lord. And consider as well that even with apparent diminishing abilities, God can use us in unique ways. It's all God's power in weak vessels.

### **3. God's plan could be for us to give all our time to ministry in our latter years.**

Moses first 80 years were not in "full time ministry," but his last 40 years were!

Now, being in "full time ministry" is not everyone's calling during their normal work years, though everything we do is to be "unto the Lord." But it might be in the latter years.

Here's what I mean. For many of you, retirement could provide an amazing opportunity to serve Christ as a principal leader or a valued helper. Some of you could go overseas and support a missionary, for instance, using whatever skills you have. Others of you could labor extensively in your church. Some could start a new ministry meeting a need that is unaddressed. The opportunities are vast and the need is great.

Can you do much for God and his kingdom when you get old? Assume the answer is "yes!" Then dream and pray and speak to those who have the insight to guide you. Go out strongly for God.