

An Older View of Life

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Age (50-75), is another milestone in our journey through life, but it probably won't be the last. At this point, we often concentrate on Us and what We are to be and do. By contrast, at Age 94, I have increasingly found as I moved into the last 25 years, it is more important to concentrate on what God is doing, with His whole Body, although this does include the nemesis of Me.

So, here are some thoughts, from an Old Man's perspective, showing some of the possible growth I see possible as we move into and on through Generation IV, Age 75—Onward.

Our Motivations may grow

Motivations are much about gain or loss: hope of gain or fear of loss in the future, and gratitude or revenge for what we have already gained or lost in the past.

Hope of gain or fear of loss in the future can motivate us to act now in order to get “more” for me and mine in the present world, or to gain a “well-done” in Heaven and/or to avoid Hell. But both are about future rewards for Me. In essence, they are about what I am to be and do—whether I receive my Reward in this world or the next. As such, the emphasis is on what I am to be and/or do to please God and carry out His will.

By contrast, motivation from what has happened in the past shifts the emphasis to the other person, e.g. a parent who sacrificed for me in this world, or the Person who sacrificed for me for eternity. When I am motivated by gratitude for what God has done by giving me physical life and eternal life, making me His child, equipping, guiding, sustaining, leading and walking with me through the past and promising to care for me in the future, (and on and on, infinitum), the emphasis shifts to God and what He has done and will do—rather than placing the emphasis on Me

and what **I** am to do or have done. As a result my motivation is one of **Gratitude**.

I am not sure we can get to past motivation (gratitude) until we walk through future motivation (fear of loss and/or hope of gain). Also, I have a hunch future motivation produces more action and good works than past motivation. Perhaps God means for us to be motivated by the future when we are younger and more able and active, and shifts to the past when we are older, less able and now motivated by what **He** has done, is doing and will do.

Our definition of Success may grow

I entitled Age 35-40 “*Success*” and Age 40-45 “*Surrender*” in “*Four Generations: A Journey Through Life*”. When I was about your age, a woman in her eighties challenged me: “*What is your definition of success?*” My answer was: “*To become the person and do the work God had planned for me.*” As I have aged and matured, so has my definition. It would now be: “*I am successful to the extent I surrender my will to God and let Him use me for His purposes.*” He has increasingly become the Actor, and I and all believers are the people He uses for His actions. I don’t mop the floor for Him; now I **am** the mop. (Joseph was a good example of a man who constantly said it was God who was the actor, e.g. interpreting dreams, etc. Genesis 40:8; 44:16.)

Our view of Oneness may grow

However, a great paradox is that life is not to be about **Me**—but it is about **Me**. As Christians, we argue it isn’t about **Me**, while “**I, you and Me**” appear on page after page of our writings. The reality is, I cannot divorce God and man. We are made in His image, and we can’t escape this “duality dilemma”. God seems often more interested in “both/and” than “either/or”. **I believe the underlying issue involves who is in charge, calls the shots and gets the credit.** It is obvious that Person is God. (cf. the Ten

Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Great Commandment). But even the Catechism combines them as we seek to "*Glorify God and enjoy Him Forever*".

As I aged it has worked best to the extent I become One with the Lord and other believers, in my spirit (John 17 and Ephesians 4), and figuratively sit on the fence watching while He uses me and the other branches and parts of His Body do His work.

Our Understanding of Pleasure, Possessions and Position/Power may grow

As I have read and studied over the years, the "*Three P's*" have been a consistent theme and challenge for me and many others throughout history and the Bible. I have tried (like many others) to understand their meaning and what God was teaching us as we have traced this theme through the Bible. They seem a blessing and/or a curse depending on how they are obtained and used. I have been struck that God's first blessing and command involved this trio in Genesis 1. Eve was tempted by Satan with the same three in Genesis 3. They are in the account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 and Solomon found them to be non-fulfilling as he *chased the wind* in Ecclesiastes. I was most struck by the way Satan used them, unsuccessfully, to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. And they are summarized, of course, in 1 John 2:15.

I have wondered if they may mature through the years. For example, the pull toward Pleasure (especially of Sex) may be strongest in our younger years in Generation I. Ages 25 to 50 in Generation II appear to be the time we strive so hard to obtain Possessions, (although we later find they aren't the answer, either). The desire for Power and Position (the Pride of life) then reaches its peak as most reach the climax of their major life work in Generation III, Ages 50-75. At that point we try to build our pyramids or write our books or have our names on buildings so

they can be our Legacy and we will be remembered after we have departed.

But most interesting (and most rewarding) has been Generation IV from Age 75-Onward. During these years the desire for the *Three P's* began to fade away as I became increasingly unable, invisible and also irrelevant—not to our loved ones or the Lord, but to what is currently going on in the world. Like old Solomon, we conclude that seeking the desires of the world was simply “*chasing the wind*”.

Although we are increasingly less relevant to the World and it is growing increasingly irrelevant to us, God’s Eternal, Infinite Kingdom becomes more important with each passing day!

Learning to Receive may cause Humility to grow

Let me conclude with one subtle, but very important lesson God has been teaching me. It took many years and much struggle to finally accept it. But it has totally changed my sense of completion and contentment in these final years.

Gradually, I came to realize life has been one long gift; and I have discovered that the humbling, often unrecognized gift that underlies all God’s other gifts, is the ability to **Receive**. It totally changed my life when I finally understood I do not start as a Giver (which builds pride) but as a Receiver (John 1:11-12) (which builds humility) who is simply given the opportunity, and responsibility, to enjoy, increase and then distribute God’s gifts in His name, after I receive them. (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Although we start life as receivers, once we have known the thrill, and sometimes the power, of being in charge, and being the “giver”, it often becomes very difficult to embrace growing older or infirm. As we approach Age 75 and Generation IV, we dread being humbled and increasingly forced to be dependent and receive from others, like a little child. But receiving is part of what

makes life have value. If we ever eliminate all the poor, sick, elderly, and needy, we will eliminate love from the world, because every act of love requires a “lovee” as well as a “lover”!

We each must play our part, sometimes as givers, and sometimes as receivers. **And there are times Receiving may be the most important—and for sure the most humbling—as we concentrate more and more on being the Receiver and letting God do the Acting!**

Conclusion

It is time now to conclude our brief discussion. I hope this little summary will be helpful as you chart your own journey through the last half of life. We have, of course, covered only a few of the areas you will be facing. I urge you, therefore, to seek out older believers and visit with them. It’s Biblical, and I think you will find it encouraging and enlightening.

Then be ready and willing to pass on what God is teaching you to those following you.

Finally, remember, what I have tried to convey is just one man’s perspective, and we all err. So, hold onto what is good (of God)—and discard the rest!

From Grandpa With Love

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