

The Challenge of Getting Old: What Kind Of Old Person Do You Want To Be?

Rich Nathan

July 21-22, 2007

1 Kings: Facing Life's Challenges

1 Kings 11:1-13

As I've gotten older, one of the things that I've enjoyed reading about is stories of people who accomplished amazing things as older adults. I read a great biography of Harry Truman by David McCullough a few years ago. Harry Trumann was a classic late bloomer. As a child growing up in the 1890's, Harry Truman had such bad eyesight that he was kept from most boyhood activities. He used to wear these really thick coke-bottle glasses and he was made fun of by the other kids. His mother kept him inside the house where he read books and learned to play piano. He was very bright, but he never attended college. His father's financial situation didn't permit Harry to go to university. In fact, he is the only U.S. President in the 20th century to never have gone to college.

He tried his hand at a few businesses and failed. And then he went back to work on his dad's farm for 11 years. He proposed to a woman named Bess when he was 27. She turned him down because his financial prospects were so poor. At the age of 33 Harry Truman joined the Army and fought in WWI. He was chosen to be an officer and became a Battery Commander in an Artillery Regiment in France. During one particularly intense battle, his regiment began to run when the Germans attacked. Harry Truman stood up on the battlefield and just lit into his men with a string of profanities that he learned while working on the railroad out West. The men were so shocked that this older guy with thick eye glasses would scream at them that way that they turned around and began to fight.

It was there that Harry Truman discovered he had some leadership ability. He went back home with a new confidence, proposed again to Bess, the woman who turned him down seven years earlier. This time she accepted his marriage proposal. He went into business, but his store failed and he spent most of the 1920's paying off every single debt that he had incurred.

It wasn't until he was well into his 40's that Harry began to experience any real success in life. He hooked up with a political machine in Missouri that began to get Harry Truman elected to a variety of offices. And so he started to climb the political ladder and eventually, became a surprise choice for Vice President under Franklin D. Roosevelt. He then shocked the nation by winning the Presidential election of 1948.

And then there is Mel Brooks. Like Harry, Mel Brooks had a tough childhood. Mel grew up in NYC in the 1920's and 30's. He was a sickly little Jewish kid that was beaten up by the other boys in school. He went to war and fought in WWII. When he got out, he discovered he had a talent for doing standup comedy and he became a comedy writer.

Mel wrote and created a situation comedy that was popular when I was growing up. It was called “Get Smart” and was about a bumbling secret service agent. Anyway, I thought it was funny as a kid. He also wrote and acted in a bunch of different comedy movies like “Blazing Saddles.”

But it was at the age of 74 when other people that age are sitting on their front porches in rocking chairs that Mel Brooks wrote a Broadway show called “The Producers” that won the most Tony Awards in Broadway history. He had to come up on stage so many times that eventually as he is holding up one of the awards, he said to the audience, “Well, I’ll see you in just a few minutes.”

Medical science is offering older adults fewer and fewer excuses for not continuing to be creative and productive at any age. I read a fascinating article on the brains of older adults. The stereotype is that your brain is at the peak of its power and nimbleness at age 40. After that, you go through this slow decline until your mind basically clouds over in your 60’s and 70’s. You can’t retain any new information and you fumble whatever you had in the past. But that is okay because you are so cranky as an old person that you aren’t open to new ideas anyway.

Well, what researchers have found out is that all of this about the decline of your brain is just absolute myth. It is the case that as you age your short-term memory is not what it was. You can’t pack in as much information in a short time as you could when you were cramming for grad school finals. But what they’ve discovered is that the sheath covering your brain, what’s called the white matter, the stuff that glues your brain together – the sheath becomes thicker and thicker as you get older and older. This means that older people are better able at accessing all parts of their brain than young people are. Older people have the capacity to be more flexible in their thinking, less rigid, more comfortable in dealing with ambiguity, more able to deal with complexity, more able to see things from different angles. In short, older people have the capacity to be what we used to call “wise.”

You don’t have to dim out. In fact, if you are interested in this kind of thing, we have a physician in our church who has been a professor of internal medicine and endocrinology at OSU’s medical school for many years. He is in his late 60’s. His name is Bill Malarkey. I had the privilege of having lunch with Bill a few weeks ago. He gave me one of his books. It is titled “Take Control Of Your Aging.” It is a very wholistic look at staying healthy as you age. I found the book fascinating. But more than that, I found Bill fascinating. He is in his late 60’s and is in amazing shape. He speaks with more youthful enthusiasm than many folks that I meet who are decades younger. He was talking with me about his latest research on stress. He is one of these guys who is totally engaged with life, with learning, with his wife, with God.

I started a series several weeks ago from the Old Testament book of 1 Kings that I’ve titled “Facing Life’s Challenges.” Today I want to talk about one simple thing: *The Challenge of Growing Old: What Kind of Old Person Do You Want To Be?* Let’s pray.

If you live to age 70 or 80 or 90 or beyond, what kind of old person do you want to be? Some people at 70 or 80 would resent even being called “old.” Oliver Wendell Holmes, who served on the U.S. Supreme Court into his 90’s, said that for him an old person was someone who was at least 15 years older than he was. But if you live to age 70 or 80 or 90, what kind of older person do you want to be?

Now, I am not asking the financial planning question that dominates so much of the discussion of old age. There are hundreds of books and thousands of financial planners who can assist you in planning out your finances after you stop drawing a paycheck. I’m not asking a financial planning question. Nor am I asking the question that dominates retirement magazines about which city in America do you want to retire to. Every year the magazines come out with articles rating retirement communities on such superficial things such as the weather. I’ve noticed on these lists that you never find Columbus, Ohio as an ideal retirement community. I don’t know why that is. I mean, who was it that decided being gray and overcast isn’t as wonderful as glorious blue skies every day. Sunshine is way overrated!

So I am not asking today the question of finances or where you want to retire. I’m asking a more fundamental question about your person, about your state of being, if you will. What kind of old person do you want to be?

You know, it is often said that the best way to live life when you are young is to live life in light of God’s judgment. To recognize that one day you will stand before God and have to give an account for what you did with what God gave you. But I would like to take this advice half a step closer for most of us. I would like to propose that perhaps the best way to live is in the light of what kind of an older person you want to become. In 1 Kings 11 we read about a man who spent his old age destroying everything he built. 1 Kings 11:1-13,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:1-13

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.” Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites.

6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done. 7 On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. 8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. 9 The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the

Lord's command. 11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. 12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

One Christian writer named Bobby Clinton wrote in a book called *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Leaders* that success in life can be defined as finishing well. Bobby Clinton is a professor of leadership studies at Fuller Seminary. He concluded from his research that only one out of four Christian leaders in the Bible and in church history finish well. And by finishing well, he is talking about finishing with a warm, growing relationship with God, a warm relationship with their spouses if they are married. I think about finishing well as being the kind of older person younger people want to be around, rather than the kind you avoid. Being the kind of dad and grandpa whose kids and grandkids don't hate to call or visit because it is so painful.

We all know older adults who are not finishing well. And I'm not talking about folks who have health issues beyond their powers. I'm talking about things that are within our control – the formation of our characters. As I think about older adults that I know, I can think of some older adults who have drifted into self-centeredness. They spend all of their time on themselves and their own hobbies. There is no room in their lives for giving back to others. I think of older adults who are impatient with and quite judgmental towards those who are younger. We've all known older adults who have just become crusty, mean, and irritable. I think of older adults who spend most of their conversations complaining and criticizing.

How many older adults have you talked to who spend all of their time living in the past. They aren't interested in the present and they aren't interested in the future. They aren't interested in putting their arm around a younger person or assisting that young person to succeed.

One of the greatest tragedies that I've witnessed on a number of occasions is an older person who torpedoed their reputation through some moral failure at the end of their lives.

My wife, Marlene, and I were invited to do a conference in England a couple of weeks ago. We did a half dozen teachings for this large outdoor Christian festival. And then we took a vacation to Ireland, a place we've never visited before. In any case, we were visiting a city in the South of Ireland called Cobh. They had an exhibit in this city because it was the last stop that the Titanic took on passengers.

But it was also here that some of the survivors from the passenger ship, Lusitania, were taken after the Lusitania was torpedoed. The year was 1915. This beautiful ocean liner called the Lusitania had sailed from NYC with over 1800 passengers on board. This

was during WWI. The Lusitania got to within 8 miles of the coast of Ireland having sailed across the entire ocean. And 8 miles off shore, as it was turning into port, the Lusitania was hit with a torpedo fired from a German submarine. 1100 people lost their lives as the Lusitania sunk in 18 minutes.

As I read about the Lusitania and saw film clips of its sailing across the ocean, I thought to myself, "That ship is a picture of so many people's lives." We spend years building and succeeding and amassing. And then in the home stretch, as we are pulling into port and making our way towards our Creator, we get torpedoed. So many followers of Christ do not end well.

Let's look at Solomon for a moment.

Now, why did King Solomon end so poorly? What lessons are there from Solomon's life to instruct you and me about how we can grow old differently?

The first thing that I see is that King Solomon cultivated everything, but his heart.

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Solomon cultivated everything but his heart

Solomon experienced incredible success in life. A few weeks ago Stephen Van Dop spoke about King Solomon's building projects – the palaces, the temple, his writings of thousands of proverbs. He was a musician, a songwriter. He was wealthier than any other kings of his day. What you could say about King Solomon was that he cultivated and built everything except his own character, his own internal space. Look at 1 Kings 11 with me and notice how the writer focuses upon King Solomon's inner space.

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:1

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites.

In verse 1 we read about King Solomon's love. And you can underline that word in verse 1,

The heart is spoken about in verse 2,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:2

2 They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

And you can circle that where it says "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their Gods."

Verse 2 also again speaks about love, which of course issues from our inner beings.

In verse 4, the heart is mentioned several times. We read:

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:4

4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

And then in verse 9, we read,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:9

9 The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

And in verse 11,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:11

11 So the Lord said to Solomon, “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

Solomon is exhibiting the “everything, but” syndrome that afflicts so many successful people. He spent his life building and amassing and cultivating everything but his own heart. All of his energies were spent out there on the external world and nothing was left over for the cultivation of his inner life. He didn’t listen to his own proverb when he said in Proverbs 4:23,

SLIDE – Proverbs 4:23

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Solomon was an empty box – beautiful on the outside, hollow on the inside. Can any of you identify with this? Anybody here feel like an empty box? Anyone here feel hollow on the inside?

In other words, friends, what is the state of your heart? Is it soft towards God? Is it weighed down with anxiety or guilt? How would you say your heart is today? Do you spend much time cultivating your inner life? Not just your outer being – what you look like, what you are amassing, what other people see of you, but your inner space, the place inside you where you meet with and communicate with God. Where are you at in your heart?

Concerning Solomon’s heart, one of the things that we see regarding Solomon was that he was half-hearted in his followership of the Lord. Verse 6,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:6

6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.

He was not entirely an idolater in old age, but what you accuse Solomon of was half-heartedness. He was a man of divided loyalties. His heart and the place inside where he met with God was crowded with other commitments, other passions.

And you know, friends, there is only so long that you can live half-heartedly before God, having divided loyalties; serving God, but also serving your pet sin, or your idol of choice. The apostle James warns us about half-heartedness and double-mindedness when he describes the double-minded man as being like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Solomon never learned the lesson of his father, King David. His father prayed in Psalm 86:11,

SLIDE – Psalm 86:11

11 Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

And one of the lessons of growing old well is continually coming before God and asking God to pull together all the competing ambitions in your heart, all the places where you not only say “yes” to God, but also “no.” King David understood that to grow old well, you need to unreservedly surrender yourself to God every day. We need to pray every day, “Lord, I want to give all of me to you today – all my thoughts, all my ambitions, all my desires, all my body. Let me spend as much time fixing up my heart as I do fixing up my house. Worry at least as much about what my heart looks like as I do what my body looks like. God help me to care about my interior space and not just my external accomplishments.”

Solomon cultivated everything but his heart. And here is the second thing I see about Solomon that caused him to end badly. Solomon was careless with his closest relationships.

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Solomon was careless with his closest relationships

There is an incident that took place a few years before in chapter 9 that gives us a warning signal of where Solomon’s life was headed. Solomon had a good friend named King Hiram, who supplied Solomon with all the materials that Solomon needed in his building projects. But here is what we read in 1 Kings 9:10-13,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 9:10-13

10 At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings—the temple of the Lord and the royal palace—11 King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. 12 But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. 13 “What kind of towns are these you

have given me, my brother?" he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul, a name they have to this day.

Solomon treated his friend shabbily; perhaps because he was too busy making a name for himself and building grand palaces. Perhaps he was too busy with big visions to sweat the details of integrity or fair dealing in business. But whatever the motive was in cheating his friend, one of the things that we discover in people who do not end well is the neglect of relationships, especially with those who are closest to them.

I read a statement recently written by an MIT Professor, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, a man by the name of Jack Coleman. He said in looking back on his life:

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One of the greatest sorrows I will carry to my dying day is that I never saw my youngest son on the stage. And he was at a private school, the Weston School. I don't think it was 20 minutes away from the Haverford campus. But I never saw him. I was too busy. And I'm going to regret that forever.

Too busy for our children; too busy to cultivate long-term friendships; too caught up in other things to work through the issues that will result in a great marriage in later years. Does this speak to any of you here? Putting your closest relationships on holds to pursue other things? Don't you just love it when you are sitting in a restaurant and you see two older people who have obviously been married for four or five decades reach across the table and hold hands with each other as they talk? Don't you just love watching older adults taking a walk hand in hand, still obviously very much in love?

Solomon failed to cultivate his own heart; he failed to cultivate relationship with those closest to him.

And third, what you see with King Solomon was that he was cavalier with his choices,

SLIDE

Solomon was cavalier with his choices

...particularly his choices of women that he was going to marry. Now, we have the most extreme kind of polygamy practiced here in 1 Kings 11. But the key problem is really found in verses 1 and 2,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:1-2

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

Now, I mentioned this a few weeks ago when we began this series. But there is almost nothing more significant in determining the course of your life than your decision regarding who you are going to closely connect yourself with. The path you travel down in life has everything to do with the people that you hang around with, the folks you listen to, and with whom you seek counsel and companionship. This is why we stress involvement in small groups. Some people are going to walk you down a path that will lead to you finishing well, and other people are going to lead you down a path that will end in finishing poorly.

So we read in Proverbs 13:20 these words: “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Now, as pastor I have encouraged those of you who are single over and over and over again to not date outside of the Christian faith. And the reason that I’ve encouraged you in that direction is not because of religious bigotry or because of some sort of spiritual arrogance. It’s not because people outside the Christian faith are not often kind, or sensitive, or great listeners, or good looking. The encouragement to not date outside the faith and certainly to not marry outside the faith is born out of the wisdom of God’s own word and the wisdom of experience. My experience of watching hundreds and hundreds of people believing that they have a better idea than God has about who they should date and who they should marry. Your close relationships form the context of your life with God and it is God who lovingly commands us to not date or marry someone who is not a follower of Jesus. Of course if you already are married, you are called to keep your marital vow. But if you are not married – don’t go there!

I can’t tell you how many folks have come to me and said that as a result of their marriage to someone who is either a lukewarm follower of Jesus, or a non-follower of Jesus, their options regarding being able to radically follow Christ have been significantly reduced. Let me share with you a story. I’ve told this before.

Several years ago I received a letter from a woman who was attending our church who said, “I’m dating a Jewish man; he’s a doctor. And now I’m beginning to wonder whether I made the right decision or not. You are Jewish, Rich, what should I do?”

I wrote her back and I said, “Well, you basically have three options: 1) You can go to your boyfriend and say: I care about you; I think you are a wonderful person; but, I have betrayed my own deepest values by dating outside of my Christian faith. The commitment I have made to God doesn’t permit me to date someone who doesn’t have the same spiritual commitment. I am so sorry for pretending that I could offer you something that I can’t offer. I can’t live this double life any longer. We need to break up.

I said: You have a second choice. If you don’t have the courage to choose option #1, you could say to the Lord: Lord, radically intervene in my boyfriend’s life over this next month. Radically, profoundly save him. But if you don’t, I’m going to have to choose option #1. That’s your second choice.

Your third choice is to pretend that you never wrote to me and go on doing what you are doing.

So, I sent off the email. The next day I received an email back – from her Jewish doctor friend. Apparently, she basically passed the buck to me and said, “Well, my pastor said I needed to break up with you.” He wrote me the most gracious letter. He said, “I’m trying to understand your advice to my girlfriend.” He said, “What I don’t understand is that you are a Christian and this just doesn’t seem to be very loving to advise someone to break up with someone who they really care about just because of religious stuff. Can you help me understand this?”

So I wrote him back and I said: “You’ve asked me a great question. Let me try to explain. I made two assumptions when I wrote to your girlfriend. Assumption #1 was that you were both older and that you weren’t just recreationally dating. You were serious about your relationship and it could possibly end up in engagement and marriage. That was my first assumption.”

“My second assumption was that your girlfriend was a committed follower of Jesus. And by a committed follower of Jesus, I mean that she had a relationship with Jesus that was more like chocolate milk than like a grapefruit. Jesus was mixed up with everything in her life, and wasn’t just a section of her life. So my concern for both of your futures was this: that her relationship with Jesus would cause increasing conflicts with her relationship with you. So if you decided to get married, she would want to give a portion of your income to the church and to missionaries, and you might feel otherwise about that. She would want to raise your children to know and love Jesus. Your girlfriend might want to spend evenings working with the homeless and you might not be interested. She might want to go on short-term missions trips. She will want to have her life revolve around her local church, and that is something she won’t be able to share with you. So, to keep you both from future pain, I thought it best to advise her to be honest with you now. Write me back and let me know what you think.”

He wrote me back immediately and said, “You know, in a weird kind of spiritual way, that chocolate milk analogy made a lot sense. I understand what you mean by being a Christian.”

The funny thing was I told that story a couple of years ago. And immediately after the service a man walked up and said to me, “Do you know who I am?” I said, “I think I can guess. You are my Jewish doctor friend, who I’ve been emailing.” He said, “That’s right; but, you don’t know the end of the story.” I said, “Well, what’s the end of the story?” He said, “I was here a month ago and I gave my life to Jesus.” They asked me to do their wedding about a year later.

Now, most of these stories don’t end up that happily. Most of the time, people break up and their boyfriends or girlfriends do not turn around. Or they ignore the counsel of God’s Word, believing that they have a better idea than God, believing that they alone will jump off the roof and instead of going down they will go up. Solomon didn’t think

that his relationships with women outside the faith would move him away from God, but they did. He did not end his life well.

Friends, everyone of our relational and moral choices moves us either closer to or further away from God.

Now, fortunately, we're not just left with negative examples in the Bible of people who ended life poorly. There are many, many folks in scripture who ended well. We read about Enoch in Genesis 5, who walked with God his whole life. We read about Abraham, who died in a good old age, full of years, still in love with God. We read about Joshua, of whom it was said in Joshua 24:31,

SLIDE – Joshua 24:31

31 Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.

And we read about Simeon, an old man, who stayed in the Temple and prophesied over the Baby Jesus, in Luke 2:29-32,

SLIDE – Lk 2:29-32

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

We read of Anna in Luke 2:36-38,

SLIDE- Luke 2:36-38

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then had been a widow for eighty-four years. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

We get the feeling from these men and women that their last years were their best years.

What kind of old person do you want to be?

A couple of years ago, along with two other pastors on our staff, Craig Heselton, our Executive Pastor, and Stephen Van Dop, who is our Evangelism Pastor, I took a series of graduate school classes at Case Western Reserve's Weatherhead School of Management. One of the things that they had us do in these leadership classes was to write our own obituary. It is a very sobering exercise, but one that I would encourage you to do. I want to read to you portions of the eulogy that I would love to have said at

my own funeral whether it takes place next week, or 40 years from now. This would be a eulogy delivered by a friend that would make me feel great:

Rich modeled for me the way to follow Christ with your whole heart. He went after Jesus with everything that he had. He also modeled for me the way to love your family. I was continually inspired to be a better husband by watching the way Rich related to Marlene. I was continually challenged to love and invest in my kids and grandkids. He was really generous with his family; and, he was the best grandpa any grandkid could ever have. He was wise, available, encouraging, supportive, and generous. Rich was an amazing friend. If he was your friend, you had a friend for life. He was a constant voice for the poor. He was a passionate advocate for women's equality in ministry, and for multiculturalism in the church. He influenced hundreds of young men and women to pursue Christian missions and ministry. There are hundreds of people serving Jesus today because of his life and example.

I don't share this with you to speak well about me except to the extent that I have a dream to end well. Is that your dream, friend? Are there some things that you would want said about you? Perhaps that you had an increasing love of Jesus as the end drew near; that you frequently said and exhibited to other people around you as you got older the attitude: "Isn't Jesus wonderful?" Don't you want to become more grateful about blessings in your life and less bitter? Don't you want to be a great friend? Don't you want long-term friends? If you have kids, or you are married, don't you want to invest in your marriage and in your kids' lives so that they will want to be near you? Don't you want to be the kind of older person who blesses young people; and who gives away rather than hoards it up? Don't you want to be a generous old person?

At the end of Solomon's life, he wrote about old age. He gave these closing words of counsel to us in Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'—"

Where we end up as older persons is determined by the choices we make now. Choose well; choose wisely. Let's pray.

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1 Kings 11:1-13

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