

=PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING=

Lesson 13

Respect for the Aged

INTRODUCTION: Nations that have respected and cared for the aged are nations of longevity. Not only does the nation live long, but the people in the nation have long life spans. This is God's promise. In our Western culture we have not learned the proper use and respect for older people. This is noted by the rapid rise of rest homes, convalescent homes, etc. In some cases it is necessary and best for older people to live under such conditions, but in many cases it is caused by lack of respect for older people. We disregard their wisdom, put them aside, force their retirement and often wait for them to die so we can inherit the fruit of their hard work.

- I. WE ARE TO RISE AT THE PRESENCE OF OLDER PEOPLE. Leviticus 19:32a. We should have respect for age and its wisdom and knowledge.
- II. WE ARE TO HONOR OLDER PEOPLE. Leviticus 19:32b. The word "honour" means "to treat as something precious or expensive," "to care for as something of value or of high price." Also notice Deuteronomy 5:16 and Exodus 20:12. We find here that old age is a result of honoring and caring for old age. This does not mean that some are not ordained by God to die young, nor does it mean that those who die young did not respect or care for their parents. It simply means that one will live longer and add years to his life by honoring his parents and other older people.

In the Bible, "older people" have no differentiation with a certain age; it simply means "older people than I."

- III. WE ARE TO SEE THE REAL BEAUTY IN OLDER PEOPLE. What is lovelier than a beautiful head of white hair? The Bible calls it a crown when white hair is upon the head of righteous, older people. Read Proverbs 20:29. You will not see on their faces the beauty of youth or strength, but you will see the beauty of wisdom, the inner beauty working its way out, and the beauty that can be caused by years of love, care, and compassion.
- IV. WE ARE TO SEE THE ROYALTY OF OLDER PEOPLE. Proverbs 16:31. We are to treat them as kings and queens. This means that they should be honored in the house, waited on in some extra-special way, and respected with the respect of royalty.
- V. WE ARE TO CARE FOR THE OLDER PEOPLE. Ruth 4:15. In this verse we are told that Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, had married Boaz and borne a child. God tells the grandmother of this child that she now has a "nourisher." In other words, God expected the grandchild to see to it that its grandmother was cared for, especially since the grandmother was a widow.
- VI. ONE WHO DOES NOT CARE FOR THE OLDER PEOPLE IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL. See I Timothy 5:8. This particular verse is not talking about a man caring for his child; it is talking about older women (I Timothy 5:2), older men (I Timothy 5:1), and "widows indeed" (I Timothy 5:3). What God is saying here is that if we do not care for our own families, especially the aged, we are worse than the infidels. A "widow indeed" was a widow over sixty years of age. Young people are to give special care to them, and the church is to watch carefully for their needs.
- VII. WE ARE NOT TO CAST ASIDE OR FORSAKE THE OLDER PEOPLE. Psalm 71:9. This Psalm was written by an older man whose son had rebelled against his father. What a pity when ungrateful sons and daughters cast aside and forsake their parents!
- VIII. WE ARE TO REMEMBER GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDFATHERS. II Timothy 1:5, 6. It would be a wonderful thing if all those who have grandparents would give them some special attention this week. Teachers, lead the class to do so.

- IX. WE ARE TO FOLLOW THE COUNSEL OF OLDER PEOPLE. In I Kings 12:13, we see that Rehoboam, the young king, sought counsel from the young men and from the old men, but he took the counsel of the young men. Because of this, his kingdom was destroyed and divided and judgment came upon the nation. Foolish is the young person who does not seek and heed the advice of wise and spiritual older people.
- X. WE SHOULD USE OLDER PEOPLE. Young people often lament the fact that they are not considered wise enough to be used. They will remind us that Joan of Arc led an army against the British at 17; John Keats wrote his masterpiece on death at 18; Nero took office at 19; Alexander the Great took office at 21; Spurgeon pastored one of the three largest churches at 19; and J. Paul Getty made his first million at age 22. A young Jack Nicholas won the U.S. Open, Stephen Foster wrote "Oh, Suzanna," and Isaac Newton invented differential calculus.

At age 22, William Randolph Hearst published his first newspaper, and George Gershwin wrote "Rhapsody in Blue" at 24. At 23, Dr. Samuel Smith wrote "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." At 26, Hirohito became Emperor of Japan, John Philip Sousa directed the Marine Corps Band, and Samuel Coleridge wrote "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." At 27, Frank Woolworth opened his dry goods stores. At 35, Wolfgang A. Mozart had written ten operas, 38 symphonies, 15 orchestra masses and 47 orchestra quartets. Percy Shelley died before he was 30; so did Nathan Hale, John Keats and Joan of Arc. Mozart died in his thirties, as did Raphael, Mendelssohn, Gershwin and Lord Byron. At 35, Jesse James had robbed 76 banks, 46 stage coaches, and 188 saloons!

However, just as the young can become exasperated at the old because the young are not taken seriously, so do the old become exasperated because they are not taken seriously and used! Some of the great Christians in the Bible did their greatest work after 70 and 80. Joshua lived to be 110; Joseph, 110; Moses, 120; Sarah, 127; Jacob, 147; Abraham, 175; and Isaac, 180.

CONCLUSION: Let the class members be instructed to take special time this week to honor their parents, their grandparents, widows indeed and older people.