

Let the Gray Heads Arise!

Retirees in Missions! Retreads for God's Glory! We Are Not Dead Yet!

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Introduction

1) Theme text: Psalm 92:14-15

- *"They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green (healthy), to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."*
- Job 12:12, *"Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding."*

2) Our interest in this subject

- *The commands & challenges of the Word of God do not stop at age 37! (Matthew 28:19-20; James 1:27).*
- 3 billion have not heard the Gospel and older people can share the Gospel and disciple others as well as younger people.

3) Not using older people is a sad waste of resources

So much to be done and highly gifted and godly people are playing shuffleboard. Older people are living for themselves instead of for Christ the last quarter of their lives.

4) Defining our terms

- A Retiree is, "A person (55+ years) who terminated partially or completely the career by which he/she earned a living."
- "Retire" and "Retirement" are terms/concepts not mentioned in the Bible.
- Average North American retirement age is 63 with 15-20 good years ahead.

I. The "Graying" of North American Churches

A. A few statistics

Today 11% of North Americans are over 65. In the next 20 years or so, those 65 and over will be 18-22%.

B. North Americans have not been reproducing at a rate to replace the work force of retirees:

- In the church - this means that there is an aging membership.
- In seminaries and Bible colleges - fewer students.
- In missions - fewer younger candidates.

II. Problems to Address:

- A. **False assumptions** (given by the elderly)
 1. Old cannot contribute. This is not true.
 2. Old are not needed. This is certainly not true.
- B. **Influences of our culture**
 1. Idol of leisure and recreation.
 2. Hedonism = "Life is for pleasure."
 3. Senior Hedonism = "Retirement years are for pleasure."
- C. **Organizational shortsightedness**

This comes about when churches and mission organizations "may" neglect the effective use of older people, or simply use them in maintenance-type jobs. Older people can do most anything!

III. Strengths and Assets of Older People

- A. **Maturity**
 1. Older people constantly say, "If only I knew **then** what I know now!"
 2. Older people are, "The Kingdom's wisest and most experienced leaders."
- B. Most elderly already have **skills** and much **experience**.
- C. **Discipline**
 1. Watch the 60-year-old working at McDonald's: There is no fussing around, they arrive on time.
 2. Absenteeism dropped from 30% to only 3% when Days Inn hotel chain began to hire senior citizens.
- D. **Respect and authority of "gray hair"**

Throughout the world, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America there is a great respect for age. (In Zambia a youth ministry asked us to send older men with gray hair to help!)
- E. **Time**

Many older people are **busy**, but they are free to choose schedule and what they want to do.
- F. **Financial independence**

Many older people have pensions, Social Security, investments, and are no longer supporting children or older parents. Most are not "plush," but can get by on less.

IV. Challenge to Age 50+ Christians

A. Set goals for the rest of your life

1. **Spiritual growth you want to pursue**
 - a. You should be a better Christian today than you were yesterday. Continue to grow in Christ! Read good - great books!
 - b. Are you growing as a Christian? **Grow in grace!** You are not dead yet!
2. **Services you want to perform**
3. **Dedicate your senior years, your best years to the Lord!**

B. Seek opportunities for ministry (Nine Suggestions:)

1. **Pray and plan ahead**

Make it a matter you lay before the Lord.
2. **Think positively about retirement years**

See retirement years as great days of opportunity, growth, and excitement!
3. **Maintain physical fitness**

For God and His service. Walk and exercise daily even if you don't want to.
4. **Tool up your mind**

Read and study daily - you may need to master something new (computers, bookkeeping, personal evangelism, teaching, discipleship).
5. **Arrange your finances**
 - a. To allow you to serve at minimum cost.
 - b. Don't just look for ministries and places to serve which will pay you a salary.
 - c. You might need to deal with your pride about trusting God and receiving support from God's people. Don't let people go to hell because you are too proud to raise funds from the church and other Christians for ministry!
6. **Organize local service projects** in your church to reach those around you as well as beyond you. Start now. Serve now locally.

7. **Apply to mission agencies**
 - a. You may shock them!
 - b. Most mission agencies will accept older people.
 - c. 300 North American agencies need volunteer help.
 - d. There are 6,000 ministry opportunities available with more than 300 mission agencies. In one mission of nearly 270 missionaries, there are over 200 ministry opportunities in 22 countries, *all which can be filled by older people!*

8. **Create new mission structures if necessary**
 - a. If you cannot find openings, then trust God with others and trust God to make an opening!
 - “Ain't Dead Yet, Inc.”
 - “Over the Hill Ministries.”
 - “Gray is Better Fellowship.”
 - “Retreads for God's Glory.”
 - b. Perhaps our motto as older people should be, *“If you young people are not going to get the job done, then get out of the way and let us old folks back at it.”*

9. **Trust God for health and safety.**
 - a. You will not die before God's time. Our Lord Jesus holds the key to death. (Rev. 1:18)
 - b. As older people, let us be examples of showing the world how to die with our backs bent under the gospel plow for God's glory. Remember as older people, “The best is still ahead!”

Sample of Ministry Opportunities for Missionaries in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s:

1. Administrative Assistants
2. Administrators
3. Agricultural/gardening trainers
4. Basic education teachers
5. Bible Club organizers
6. Bible Teachers
7. Bookkeepers
8. Books for pastors' coordinator
9. Builders, contractors, carpenters
(children's homes, churches, schools
and emergency teams)
10. Business administrators and managers
11. Camp missionaries
12. Child care/day care ministries
13. Children's workers
14. Christian Scouts Ministry
15. Church planters among the poor/rich
16. Church-based community schools
workers
17. Community Development workers
18. Computer specialists to assist all
ministries
19. Crisis Team missionaries and trainers
20. Discipleship workers to all (poor, rich,
street children, orphans)
21. Drop-In Center missionaries
22. ESL Instructors
23. Evangelism to poor, rich, street
children, and orphans
24. General ministry workers to adults,
youth, men, women, poor, rich, street
children
25. Livelihood project developers
26. Maintenance Electricians, Heating &
Air Condition, Plumbing
27. Medical missionaries (doctors, nurses,
midwives, helpers)
28. Mentor needy pastors, Pastoral
Leadership Development workers
29. Prison workers
30. MK school faculty and staff
31. Office help/bookkeeper
32. Orphanage workers
33. Publication/Graphics
34. Refugee missionaries
35. Research and Network Specialists
36. Special Education teachers and
aides
37. Sports ministry
38. Summer and short-term mission's
organizers
39. Teachers and teacher trainers
40. Trainers for youth work skills
(mechanics, computers, construction)
41. Trainers in income generation
42. Trainers of children's workers
43. Trainers of church planters among
the poor
44. Urban missionaries to the poor
45. Video production
46. Vocational teachers
47. Writers

Recommended Books to Read

1. Motivation for Missions

A Mind for Missions, Paul Borthwick (NavPress). Learn how to make God's passionate heart for the world a part of your daily life.

From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions, Ruth Tucker (Zondervan). An Excellent "thumbnail" history of missions.

Let the Nations be Glad!, John Piper (Baker Books). Worship, the ultimate goal of the church, fuels missions. Missions is, because worship is not.

A Guide to Short-Term Missions – A Comprehensive Manual for Planning and Effective Missions Trip, Dr. Leon Greene (Gabriel Publishing). A thorough look at the challenges and blessings facing anyone preparing for a short-term missions trip.

Eternity in Their Heart, Don Richardson (Regal Books). The concept of an eternal God can be found in hundreds of cultures around the world.

Tentmaking: Business as Mission, Patrick Lai (Authentic). The results of an extensive survey on workable alternatives to conventional missionary life.

Operation World – 21st Century Edition, Patrick Johnston and Jason Mandryk (Authentic Publishing). This book is packed with inspiring information for prayer about every country of the world.

2. Support and Care

Doing Member Care Well, Kelly O'Donnell-ed (William Carey Library). A reference book of network, specialists, send and self-care for missionaries.

Families on the Move, Marion Knell (Monarch Books). Practical approaches to preparing for the mission field, building bridges with 'home' and making right choices.

Serving As Senders~Today: Caring for Your Missionaries While They Prepare to Go, While on the Field and Return Home, Neal Pirolo, (Emmaus Road Intl.) Scores of ideas of how to partner with your missionary friend in six areas of care. (Available in 20 languages.)

The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionary, Neal Pirolo (Emmaus Road Intl). Through 70 case studies, the Church learns how to serve in this most neglected area of missionary care.

Funding Your Ministry, Scott Morton (Dawson Media). Excellent Bibles Studies and practical training.

Living More with Less, Doris Janzen (Herald Press). Learn how to enhance your lifestyle while spending less money.

People Raising, Bill Dillon (Moody Press). Basic support raising principles.

3. Inspiring Stories of Missions and Missionaries

A Chance to Die, Elizabeth Elliott (Fleming H Revell). The Life of Amy Carmichael, an Irish missionary.

Bruchko, Bruce Olson (Creation House). The astonishing true story of a 19-year-old missionary among the Motilone Indians in South America.

By Their Blood, James & Marti Helfey (Baker Books). A record of Christian martyrs of the 20th Century.

Peace Child, Don Richardson (Regal Books). Come to understand the concept of “redemptive analogy” through the story of Sawi people.

Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot, Elizabeth Elliott (Harper & Row). A life-changing biography of Jim Elliot.

Through Gates of Splendor, Elizabeth Elliot (Living Books). The true story of the martyrdom of five men in Ecuador.

4. Resources Available through Emmaus Road International [<http://www.eri.org/>] –

ACTS Media Resources:

Prepare for Battle! – This 8-hour DVD comes with 19 pages of Student Notes and Assignments and a Study Guide for Groups or Individuals.

Serving as Senders – This 6-hours DVD is the “book” live!

For Those Who Go – This 5+ hour DVD takes a long look at many cross-cultural issues and their solutions.

What's The Big Deal? They're just Coming Home! – The attitude expressed in the title of the 2-hour DVD is only one of 34 factors that make coming home so difficult for a missionary.

Developing Your Partnership Team – This 2-hour DVD or CD is the counterpart of the book, *Serving as Senders* – Today, instructing the missionary in how to develop relationships in the six areas of support.

Solutions to Culture Stress – This 4-hour DVD helps prepare a short-term missionary for the culture stress of going overseas and returning home.

The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries – This study book zeroes in on the least understood and most difficult time in the life of a missionary, and how you can help.

ACTS Publications:

Serving as Senders Today — Developing the personal/relational level of Member Care.

The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries — This study zeroes in on the least understood and most difficult time in the life of a missionary, and how you can help.

Prepare for Battle: Basic Training in Spiritual Warfare — This Scripturally-based study (over 700 references), builds a solid foundation that one should know before launching into the advanced levels of warfare.

I Think God Wants Me to be a Missionary — Solutions to sixty different issues to be considered at the outset of such a venture are put into a story format of four young people.

Internationals Who Live Among Us: Doing World Missions at Home — God has brought the internationals of the world to the doorstep of every Christian church. This study of seven types of internationals gives scores of ideas of how to minister among them.

Contact information for the above resources: Emmaus Road International, 7150 Tanner Court, San Diego, CA 92111 USA; www.eri.org; Emmaus_Road@eri.org; 858 292-7020.

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