

# Older Christians, Arise!

by Dickey Howard

Being, or looking, young has become an obsession with many in our country today. We see many companies spending millions of dollars on advertisements to attract the young, or to sell some product to make the older look younger. A wrinkle is like some dreaded disease. Folks will do everything from putting mud on their face to having surgery for a younger look. It is an understatement to say old age is losing respect. Respect for old age has reached such a low in the Netherlands that the Dutch parliament gave final approval to a new euthanasia law. This type mind set is very dangerous, because it supports the thought that the older are useless.

When seeking a place of worship many will ask, "How many young people do you have?" or "What do you do for the young people?" Often we hear a statement such as, "I am worried about that congregation because they have a lot of older Christians." We must agree, young people are important to a congregation, but the number of young folks, or their activities, should not be the only criteria for choosing a place of worship. I become concerned when I hear of a congregation that has no older Christians.

This "young" mind set is detrimental to many older folk's thinking. Older Christians face the danger of becoming discouraged and think age and physical weakness have disqualified them from the Lord's service. I have heard more than one older Christian, talking about the work of the church, say something like, "Well, I'm just going to turn it over to the young folks." "The future of the church is in the hands of the young anyway." Truth is, the future of the church is not just in the hands of the young, but in the hands of the older and how they indoctrinate the younger. We must always remember, God doesn't have a retirement plan, and the church is not a rest home. Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

So, older Christians stand up and be what God would have you to be. God has always had older folks in his plans, and he still does. No, you won't always be able to do as you did when you were younger, but there are still some things you can do. God expects you to bear fruit in your old age.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; (emphasis, dh) they shall be fat and flourishing; To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him (Ps. 92:12-15).

The prayer of every older Christians should be, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this

generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (emphasis, dh, Ps. 71:17-18). "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Ps. 71:9).

As we read God's plan, we can easily see the godly home and family is at the very root of the word being passed from generation to generation. The godly home is at the very root of a godly community, nation, and most importantly, a faithful church. This is where the older Christian can make a huge difference. When Paul wrote to Titus in the second chapter of his letter, he was not talking about all the teaching of the older Christian being done only in the church.

The bold preaching of the gospel must be supported in the home. Too often, parents and grandparents complain, in the presence of the children, and each other, about the length of the sermon, or the calling of names in defense of the gospel against error. Likewise, the Bible classes must be supported in the home. The older must be seen reading and studying their Bibles and preparing for class. The older must be heard praying for the work of the church, the members, its leadership, and the evangelist. All of the family should feel comfortable talking about God. Bible things and people should be a part of many conversations in the home. A trip to grandma's house should be more than milk and cookies.

Too many churches of Christ have been in existence for many years without scriptural leadership. Parents and grandparents must begin teaching their young men to prepare for the eldership. The young ladies, likewise, must be taught to be elder's wives. We realize not all young men and women will grow up and become elders or elder's wives, but teaching them to live in such a manner is still very profitable. This must be done while they are young, and it must be done in the home. The older are to teach the younger, ". . . that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:12). It is past time that some grandparents step in and "meddle" in some affairs of their children and grandchildren.

Some grandmothers and grandfathers need to tell their children and grandchildren to stop going out of the house naked. The teaching of dressing modestly must be supported in the home. Children are to respect their parents, even after they are married. So, when you see your children and grandchildren dressing immodestly, speak up. When you see them going to "R" rated movies, speak up. When you hear them speaking in a manner unbecoming to a Christian, speak up. When you see them going to places a Christian has no business going, speak up. Teach them righteous living.

Too often, our young Christians are marrying those outside the body of Christ. Teach your children and grandchildren to become a Christian and to marry a Christian. What could be more important than sharing their life with someone of like precious faith? The young women are to be taught "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:5).

Being "just" a housewife has become distasteful to many in our culture today. Our young must be taught it is an honorable thing to be a keeper at home. The older must have the backbone to speak up and tell the younger women to stay home and take care of the young children while there is time to shape their minds in the ways of the Lord. What better future can one give his children?

Too often we hear of some that blame the church for their children's lack of Bible knowledge. Parents and grandparents should be ashamed to make such statements while allowing their children to attend Bible class week in and week out, never having studied their lesson, and many times not having their own lesson. The older Christian can have a great impact on the young by helping them with their lessons and teaching them the importance of taking responsibility for themselves.

Goebel Music, in his book, **Behold the Pattern**, quoted Rubell Shelly saying, "Mine was the last generation that would tolerate indoctrination . . . Mine was the last generation that would tolerate indoctrination and sit through things we know were mockeries of the reality we were giving lip service to and tolerate it. My kids won't . . . One of these days there will be grandchildren. They won't stay with a tired institution that calls itself the church."

Brethren, the only reason our children and grandchildren won't be indoctrinated is because we have stopped putting forth the effort. We hear some older Christians say they are really concerned about the direction the church is going today. Yet, while still able, they have stopped teaching because they have done it for so many years. Many times the novice is allowed to teach a Bible class because he is the only one who is willing. There has never been a time for the older to quit, as long as they are able, and today is no different.

It has been said, "We are always only one generation away from apostasy." But, on the other hand, it has also been said, "We are only one generation from being a faithful, taught people." Let us be that generation. "Older Christians, Arise."