

THE PERKS OF AGING!

-There was a little girl who went to visit her grandmother one day. They spent all day playing games, walking in the woods, picking berries, made cookies together, read books and had teatime together. Before the little girl left for home, she turned to her grandmother and said, “Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?” Grandma replied, “No, Dear, how are we alike? The little girl replied, “You love me and have all the time in the world to spend with me!”

-Out of babes comes the voice of truth!

-God does love us and has all the time in the world to spend with us. And as we age, His time with us becomes more and more dear because we realize He was always there even when we may have been too busy to notice in our younger years.

-Time teaches us this wisdom.

-This is one of the good things about growing older, we become wiser.

-Today we are going to look at scripture that tells us all the perks of aging that God offers if we would just see it.

-Let’s start off with an easy question, how many of you are aging? (Everyone! :D)

-Do you think God has a purpose for aging? If so, what do you think it might be, hint, we just talked about it? (Gleaning wisdom from all we go through!)

-How many of you have ever said “If I knew then what I know now, I would have made wiser choices?” (...)

-This is one of the perks of aging – wisdom!

-Job, one of the greatest patriarchs of the Old Testament said this very thing. Does anyone remember who Job was and what happened to him? (He was a great man of faith, extremely wealthy, had 10 children and greatly respected by all who knew him. When he was about 120 yrs. old, he lost everything He had because God told Satan to consider his servant Job because He knew how faithful he was and wanted his story to be told to generations. Satan was allowed to take all that Job had and physically torment him. He lost his 10 children, his possessions, his position, his health but never his faith. In the end, God rewarded him with a double portion. Thousands of years later we are learning from him today.)

-Let’s read what Job said in our first verse about aging, #1 on our Verse Sheet: (Job 12:12 “Is not wisdom found among the aged? *Does not long life bring understanding?*”)

-Notice Job said “wisdom is found among the aged.” Then he continued with a question asking “Does not long life bring understanding?”

-How does long life bring understanding? (We usually gain wisdom and understanding gradually through the pain and joys of experiencing the ups and downs of a “long life”. Through these experiences, we make choices and the outcomes from those choices and experiences teach us a profound understanding that God is our source for everything.)

-Most young people do not have this because they have yet to experience so much that many of the aged have. Wisdom comes from understanding, and understanding comes from experiencing a long life with Christ and studying His

Word and applying it to each situation throughout our whole life, a complete dependency on Him.

-God has a plan for aging, if He didn't He wouldn't have said that man's years would be somewhere between 80-120 years.

-He could have said 30-40 years but in His wisdom He created us so He may cultivate our hearts over time to grow closer to Him and totally dependent on Him. That is true wisdom.

-So, perk #1 in aging is *wisdom!*

-Let's look at perk #2, it comes from 2 Corinthians 4:16. Let's read it together to find out what it is, it is #2 on our Verse Sheet: (2 Corinthians 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, *yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*")

-So, this verse confirms that outwardly our bodies are aging but what do you think it means when it says: "yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day?" (Our hearts, our attitudes, our spirits are being renewed daily.)

-How do these things get renewed day by day as we age? (Praying, leaning on God's Word, speaking His promises daily through His Spirit in us)

-So perk #2 is *we are being renewed day by day by God.*

-Let's read verse #3 on our Verse Sheet that confirms how this is done: (Colossians 3:2 "Set your minds *on things that are above*, not on things that are on the earth.")

-So what do we set our minds on? (Things above, not on the earth.)

-Through long life we learn to set our minds on things above, which is God, His Word, His promises and Who He is in our lives. As we age, the stronger our dependency on God becomes. He molds our hearts and attitudes to become more like His.

-This can be hard when facing a long life of storms. But I want you consider something, how many of you have seen a palm tree in the midst of a hurricane on the Weather Channel or on the internet? (...)

-What do they do when the winds and rain are beating down on them? (They bend and sway.)

-Did you know that when hurricanes hit the shore, most palm trees will thrive under the pressures of the wind and rain? (...)

-Palm trees are the few trees that are left standing after hurricanes because they are able to bend and sway during the storm but stay *grounded* in the sand or dirt. After the hurricanes, their palms may be a little weathered from what they went through, much like our own bodies, but they still stand tall and ready to face the storms again.

-That is what our life is like. Through long life, we face the storms of life and it does weather our bodies. But when we stay *grounded* in God's Word, we come through a little more weathered but a lot wiser, renewed by His Word, His power and His presence.

-Renewing our hearts *day by day* in His Word helps us in this long journey called life.

-So again, perk #2 is that aging teaches us to be *renewed by God day by day.*

-Let's talk about perk #3! This is a fun one.

-How many of you have gray hair or signs of gray hair? (...)

-Here is a short story of where gray hair may have come from. A little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast to her brunette hair. She looked at her mother and asked, "Mama, why are some of your hairs white?" Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white." The little girl thought about this for a moment and then asked in shock, "Mama, how come ALL of *grandma's* hairs are white?" (*pause for laughter*)

-This is a funny story but did you know that God sees gray hair as a crown of splendor? (...)

-It's true! It comes from two verses in the Bible. Let's read them together, #4 on our Verse Sheet: (Proverbs 16:31 and 20:29 "*Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness... The glory of the young is their strength; the gray hair of experience is the splendor of the old.*")

-What are the first seven words in these verses? ("Gray hair is a crown of splendor.")

-God considers gray hair a crown, and not just any crown, a splendid crown!

-The dictionary definition of splendid is brilliant, wonderful, magnificent, more than fabulous.

-According to God, gray hair is beautiful. It bespeaks gravity, wisdom and prudence in God's eyes. It commands reverence and respect.

-Notice in the verses it says that it is "attained in the way of righteousness" and at the end of these verses "experience".

-How can "*splendid*" gray hair be attained through a life of righteous living and experience? (When we give our lives to the Lord and walk through the years before us in the knowledge of His Word and the saving grace of Jesus our Savior, living soberly and righteously by His Word through every trial we face, choosing to follow Him throughout all of life, as we age, our relationship with the Lord becomes sweeter and more precious. We care more about Him and what is important to Him than we do the things of this world.)

-That is beautiful to Him! As a believer in Christ, age and graying hair is a product of experiencing a long life with Christ and His Word. It is like a longtime friendship with the best friend you could ever have.

-So, perk #3 is having *Gray Hair* that is attained by righteous living with God!

-Let's look at perk #4 in aging, it comes from our next verse on our Verse Sheet, #5, let's read it together: (Psalm 92:12-14 "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. *They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.*")

-What do that last sentence say again? ("They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.")

-So, perk #4 is: *Still bear fruit* in old age!

-You may be asking “how can that be when we are old and not able to do things as we did in our younger years?”

-We already talked about how we are like palm trees as we age, able to flourish and withstand the storms of life when we are grounded in God’s Word.

-But, how are we like the cedars of Lebanon and able to bear fruit in old age?

-Let’s look at what was so special about the cedars of Lebanon to help us understand why these verses say we are like them.

-Did you know that the cedars of Lebanon were prized for their *high quality, pleasant scent* and *resistance to both rot and insects* in ancient buildings?

-Does anyone remember what ancient buildings in the Bible they were used to build? (The Temple in Jerusalem as well as palaces for King David and King Solomon.)

-Even today they are an emblem of strength and permanence throughout the world.

-When you think of aging and being compared to the cedars of Lebanon, let’s look at the *high quality* aspect of it first and how it relates to us.

-When we are *planted in the house of the Lord*, through our salvation, God sees our worth and value because He sees His Son in us. He regards us as *high quality* because we are His children, we become the children of the King, and we will *flourish in His courts* one day for eternity.

-So, like the cedars of Lebanon, God’s sees us as high quality, His treasures.

-Next, let’s look at the second aspect of the cedars of Lebanon, their pleasant scent.

-If anyone has ever smelled cedar, it has an exquisite fragrance, and the cedars of Lebanon are said to have an exceptionally fragrant bark. The tree itself is wrapped in this lovely aroma.

-Just as the cedars of Lebanon are wrapped in this lovely aroma, how can we wrap ourselves in a lovely aroma so others may smell the love we have for Jesus and for them? (Having a pleasant attitude and thankful hearts for what Jesus has done in our lives, giving praise to Him in all things, etc. can draw others to us and to want to know what is different about us. They may want to know the Savior.)

-Let’s look at the last aspect about the cedars, their resistance to rot and insects.

-Just like the cedars were resistant to rot and insects, as we age, how can we be resistant to *rot* in our hearts by the penetrating *insects* of unforgiveness, hatred, anger, bitterness and wrong attitudes? (By Renewing our hearts in God’s Word daily, asking for forgiveness, being thankful, encouraging, forgiving, loving, and not letting bitterness and ungratefulness set in, etc.)

-Like the cedars, we can be an emblem of strength and permanence in our relationship to Christ for the young to see. By staying faithful and hopeful even when we may be in tough situations, sharing with them the goodness of God throughout our lives and resting in His stability even when our bodies and lives may not be, being a rock of faith as Job was, and having attitudes of forgiveness and joy

because our Savior gave that to us and so much more, can encourage them.

-If we do all these things, how can that “*bear fruit in [our] old age*”? (Hopefully as others see it in the aged, they too will want that same salvation and strength that the Lord offered the aged throughout their whole lives and want Him in their own lives as well and ask Him to be their own Lord and Savior.)

-So, perk #4 is that even in our old age God can still bear fruit through us!

-To end our lesson, let’s go over all 4 perks about aging that God planned for His children. It is at the bottom of our Verse Sheet, let’s read them together:

1. WE GLEAN WISDOM FROM A LONG LIFE WITH GOD
2. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF RENEWING OUR HEARTS DAILY WITH GOD
3. GRAY HAIR IS SPLENDOUS TO GOD
4. WE CAN STILL BEAR FRUIT IN OLD AGE WITH GOD

-I want to close with a beautiful poem written by Connie Bratcher about what we studied today. I hope it encourages each of us and inspires us that aging is God’s perfect design for those He has called to do this journey with Him, our forever Friend!

“FRUIT IN OLD AGE” (by Connie Campbell Bratcher)

Planted in the house of the LORD,
Delivered from darkness grim,
We’ll still bring forth fruit in old age,
As our eyes are fixed on Him.
Yes, even in those latter years,
When the body is so weak,
We’ll flourish in the courts of God...
As His will and way we seek!

Differing talents are bestowed,
By our Heavenly Father,
And each child of His is unique,
Not one’s just like another.
He delights in souls made righteous,
By the blood of His dear Son,
And He anoints for special work...
Until time on earth is done.

O what a wonderful Savior!
His Spirit in us resides,
And we’ll flourish like the palm tree,
All the days of our lives.
It may be just a simple smile,
Or it may be something more,
But we’ll still bear His precious fruit...
Till we reach Heaven’s shore!

“THE PERKS OF AGING” VERSE SHEET

1. Job 12:12 “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?”
2. 2 Corinthians 4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, *yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*”
3. Colossians 3:2 “Set your minds *on things that are above*, not on things that are on the earth.”
4. Proverbs 16:31 and 20:29 “*Gray hair is a crown of splendor*; it is attained in the way of righteousness... The glory of the young is their strength; the *gray hair of experience is the splendor* of the old.”
5. Psalm 92:12-14 “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. *They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.*”

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3. GRAY HAIR IS SPLENDOROUS TO GOD!
4. WE CAN STILL BEAR FRUIT IN OLD AGE WITH GOD