

Growing Old Graciously

IF YOU ARE IN THE LATTER HALF of your life and you chronically belittle yourself or quietly claim to be of little value to the human race, it is time to stop such utterances.

They are not true. You may feel that way at times, but your feelings lie. Here are some important things to remember.

You have something every living human being needs. As you grow older and other pressures and responsibilities change or drop away, a new opportunity is open for you. It is that of being an encourager—a support to the younger generation and to your peers as well. What a great new title to own: “I am an encourager.” Inscribe that on your heart. It is the number-one step for gracious living at any age.

Inside you are many unspoken words of appreciation, admiration, and encouragement. Inside you are compliments that have never been expressed, kind words aching to be given away. You have smiles to spread everywhere you go. And you need never run out.

There is no human being who cannot use what you are carrying around.

That is why you must abandon any tendency to think of yourself as of little value in this world. Everyone you meet needs what you have!

Some time ago I was visiting a retirement home, and a woman came up to me and identified herself. After we chatted a bit, I said to her, “You are beautiful!” She glowed like she had been plugged into an electric socket. Anyone can offer such a gift.

Retirement years free us for a more deliberate and intentional career in brightening our environment.

Bert is 84 years old and intent on following Jesus’ instruction to let his light shine. He understands how he can brighten other’s lives. Here is just one example.

While shopping at a gigantic arts-and-crafts show, Bert made a point of stopping at as many of the 200 booths as he could. At each booth he thanked the owner, who was usually the artist who had created the objects for sale. He said, “Thank you for making the world a more beautiful and interesting place by crafting your art

share in God’s image. God distributes lovingkindness indiscriminately, without regard for who deserves it.

The younger generation, especially, needs the affirmation of their elders. Grandchildren, nieces and nephews, neighbor kids, other people’s children—they all need to hear compliments and kind words



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so nicely.” The artists were usually caught off guard but then beamed with appreciation for the kind words.

Bert had changed his spectacles. Instead of seeing merchants wanting to take his money, he saw creators of beauty making their inspired pieces available. He realized they deserved appreciation and needed encouragement. He found that his praise and support were like cups of cool water to thirsting souls.

Growing old graciously means recognizing in everyone around you a need for appreciation, admiration, and encouragement. In doing so we

from older folks. Send a note or email or text. Better yet, say it in person.

Gracious living is giving support and spirit-lifting words at the car wash, the grocery store, the bank, and every place else. Graciousness is forgetting yourself and giving to others. And you have plenty to give until your final breath. ■



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