

A watercolor illustration in shades of gray and muted colors. It depicts a landscape with several trees. The trees have dense, textured foliage. Some leaves are shown falling through the air, appearing as small, detailed shapes. The background is a soft, textured wash of light gray and white, suggesting a misty or overcast sky. The overall style is artistic and painterly.

NOT TOO OLD

college
press 
Joplin, Missouri

NOT TOO OLD: Turning Your Later Years into Greater Years

Copyright © 2024

College Press Publishing

www.collegepress.com

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

ISBN: 978-0-89900-116-6 (Paperback)

ISBN: 978-0-89900-117-3 (Hardback)

ISBN: 978-0-89900-118-0 (eBook)

ENDORSEMENTS

“*Not Too Old* is just terrific! It’s the best and most thorough book on aging I’ve ever read, and it is the best gift you could give to someone who’s struggling with aging. It will lift their spirits and challenge them to live every day to the fullest. It’s also a great gift for preachers and church leaders (including younger ones) because it reminds us that healthy churches are inter-generational churches. This book is challenging, humorous, practical, helpful, thorough, and biblical. It lifted my spirits and challenged me to keep stretching to make every day count.”

BOB RUSSELL

Senior Minister (Retired)
Southeast Christian Church
Louisville, Kentucky

“Throughout this book, Dave Faust serves as a compassionate guide through the realities of growing older. Chocked full of engaging stories, warm wisdom, and practical ideas, *Not Too Old* is a beautiful and empowering traveling companion and equipping tool for anyone desiring to finish the last season of life well, while preparing with great anticipation for the season yet to come.”

WENDY HERRBERG

Registered Nurse, Counselor, and Life Coach
with Renewal Counseling, LLC

“I am in the ‘Builder’ generation of which David writes in this book, and I really benefitted from his enlightening words. In seventeen chapters David touches on such things as fears about aging, the high calling of grandparenthood, and entering the role of a caregiver. Each chapter is worth the price of the book. David writes in a winsome and compassionate manner, and I know this book is going to be a blessing to all who ‘take up and read.’”

VICTOR KNOWLES

Founder/President
Peace On Earth Ministries
Joplin, Missouri

“This book answers every question a Christian has about growing old, from both a spiritual and a practical perspective. Who needs to read this book? Those of us who are already old or will one day grow old, which includes you, your children, your parents, and your grandparents. The wisdom imparted here will bless, guide, and encourage not only you and your loved ones, but your church as well. I’m currently in my 70s, yet Dave Faust reminds me that I’m NOT TOO OLD to turn my later years into greater years!”

ED SIMCOX

former Indiana Secretary of State

“This book will be useful for helpers, counselors, or those who are grieving themselves. It has something for everyone, even those of us who are definitely ‘not too old.’ As a counselor, I see the nuggets of truth and encouragement in these pages as something I can use with clients, supervisees, or peers to help them in their journeys.”

NATALIE HUBARTT, LMHC

Director of Counseling, Support & Recovery
East 91st Street Christian Church

“*Not Too Old* is a must-read for those of us in this later season of life. Dave Faust has woven together great advice, humor and biblical promises that will set us up for success. After finishing this book, I’m ready to make adjustments that assure my later years become greater years.”

SCOTT SWAN

News Anchor
WRTV, Indianapolis

“*Not Too Old* shows us that age is merely a number when it comes to fulfilling our God-given destiny and achieving victory in life’s race. Through engaging storytelling and biblical truths, Dave Faust uplifts, inspires, and turns the tables on age, cheekily suggesting that you’re only as old as you feel when sprinting toward your finish line—walker and orthopedic shoes optional.”

COLONEL MARCUS H. THOMAS

U.S. Army (Retired)

DEDICATION

This book is written in loving memory of my great-grandparents, Frank and Addie Faust. They died before I was born, so I won't meet them until I get to heaven; but their faith has cascaded down through the generations like a river watering parched soil.

I also dedicate this book to two friends who have served Christ faithfully and fruitfully, not only when they were young, but also during their senior adult years. Bob Russell's practical biblical preaching and John Samples' loving pastoral care continue to help people turn their later years into greater years.

APPRECIATION

Jim Nieman, managing editor of *Christian Standard*, used his editorial skills to help make this book a lot better than it would have been without his sharp eyes and godly wisdom. I am deeply grateful for his assistance. And I am grateful to my wife, Candy, and my friends at East 91st Street Christian Church who understand and encourage my desire to write articles and books that "teach the Bible and love the people."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	You Need to Read This Book— Even if You Are Young.	9
2	You Are Not Too Old— Unless You Think You Are.	19
3	Scared of the Dark— Facing Your Fears About Aging	29
4	The Levity in Your Longevity— Enjoying the Lighter Side of Aging	45
5	Crowned With Gray— What the Bible Says About Old Age.	57
6	Your Children's Children— The High Calling of Grandparenthood	75
7	Temple Maintenance— Staying Fit When Your Body Wants to Quit	93
8	Don't Stay too Close to Where You Got in— Pursuing Spiritual Maturity as an Older Adult	113
9	Retired or Refired? Life Doesn't Stop When Your Career Ends	131
10	Still Part of the Body of Christ— Finding Your Place in the Church as a Senior Adult	151
11	You Can't Take It with You, So What Should You Do with It?— Money Management for Older Adults.	171
12	Old Friends, New Friends— Cultivating Lasting Relationships as You Age	189
13	Be Patient with the Patient— Embracing the Role of a Caregiver	203
14	Growing Through Grief— Dealing with Loss When a Loved One Dies	223
15	Live Until You Die— What Wise Leaders Can Teach Us About Aging	243
16	Rounding Third and Heading for Home— Preparing Yourself to Die Well	257
17	Finishing Well— Staying Faithful Till It's Time to Go	277
	End Notes	289

1 | You Need to Read This Book— Even if You Are Young

*“Old age is like everything else.
To make a success of it, you’ve got to start young.”*

—Theodore Roosevelt

*“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second-best time is now.”*

—Chinese proverb

It’s time to take a new look at old age.

On my sixtieth birthday my grandchildren gave me a serviceberry tree to plant in my backyard. Before that day I didn’t know serviceberry trees existed, but it turns out, they are common in Indiana where I live. If you manage to keep the birds away, by early June the trees produce delicious red berries that taste like tart cherries. My grandkids said, “Papa, we want you to have a serviceberry tree because serving God is important to you.”

I enjoyed my birthday celebration, but some unpleasant questions crossed my mind while we planted the tree. I wondered, *Now that I have reached age 60, how much service do I have left? Is the best part of my life behind me?*

You may have asked questions like these yourself. But notice what it says in the book of Psalms:

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 (Psalm 92:12-14).

I like that description of old age. Who wouldn't want to "flourish like a palm tree" and "grow like a cedar of Lebanon"? I want to "still bear fruit in old age" and "stay fresh and green" as long as possible—not just wither away and wait to die.

The apostle Paul probably was in his sixties when he urged his young friend Timothy to "be prepared in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). Are you well-prepared for the next season of life? If you live into your seventies, eighties, or nineties, will you keep serving the Lord and bearing fruit for him? Will you be a faithful Christ follower or an old fuddy-duddy? A cheerful soul or a grumpy old grouch? A hope giver or a dream crusher? Will you "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15)?

At this point in my life—somewhere between Generation X and Generation X-Ray—I'm still adjusting to viewing myself as a senior adult. I'm not a spring chicken anymore. Apparently, I'm now a fall (or winter) chicken.

A young colleague on my church staff was describing another member of our church. "He's an *old* guy," my friend explained, "in his *sixties*." To me, 60 doesn't sound old. Another staff member mentioned "classic old hymns" people sing in church, and he was talking about songs from the 1990s.

When my daughter was 10 years old, she asked, "Dad, when you were little, did you dress like the Pilgrims?"

"No," I answered, "but I think Grandpa did."

One time I told my mom, "It's hard to believe my kids are all in their thirties now."

She replied, "How do you think I feel? My boys are all in their sixties!" (She always referred to my two older brothers and me as her "boys," even though we are grandpas ourselves.)

Soon after my sixtieth birthday I was invited to speak to a group of senior adults at a retreat. I entitled my message, "Not Too Old," and afterward I felt a growing desire to write a book on that topic to encourage adults to age well and stay engaged in serving God. I jokingly told my friends, "I want to write a book about aging, but I don't feel qualified because I'm not old enough." Eventually, though, I decided I shouldn't wait any longer to write this book, lest I become too old to accomplish the task!

I am convinced that Scripture has a lot to teach us about aging, and older people have untapped wisdom and ministry potential to be unleashed. No matter how old you are, you are *not too old* to make a difference.

Why Should You Think About Aging?

During nearly 50 years of Christian ministry, I have presided at hundreds of funerals and interacted with thousands of senior adults. I am amazed by the number of people who are in denial about aging. Why should old age and death catch us by surprise? Years ago, Dr. James Dobson wrote a book for parents called *Preparing for Adolescence* to prepare them and their children for the tumultuous transitions of the early teens. Since I am writing about aging, should I call this book *Preparing for Obsolescence*? No! We don't have to become obsolete in our later years.

No matter who you are, this book is for you, because there are compelling reasons you should think about aging.

YOU MIGHT ALREADY BE OLD NOW.

Maybe you picked up this book or someone suggested you should read it because you are already old.

My wife, Candy, asked our granddaughter Kayla, “Do you think Nana and Papa are old?” Kayla thought a moment and replied, “*Medium* old.” Candy and I still are trying to figure out when we will cross the line between “medium old” and “extremely old.”

The word *senior* comes from the same root as the word *senate* (a gathering of wise, seasoned leaders); but from the same root we also get the unflattering word *senile*. In the workplace, a title like “senior vice president,” “senior partner,” or “senior minister” earns respect, but some older people bristle at being called “senior citizens” and consider it a patronizing or degrading designation. Some cultures (and many churches) consider it an honor to be called an “elder,” but for many of us, “elderly” brings to mind poor health and diminished ability. One church member over age 80 said she didn't want to be part of a “senior citizen” group because it made her feel old!

Oliver Wendell Holmes quipped, “Old age is always 15 years older

than I am.” The U.S. Social Security Administration defines anyone age 65 or older as “elderly.” However, people today tend to live longer than in the past. When Social Security began in 1935, the average life expectancy in the United States was 61 years, but now that number has increased by more than a decade. AARP, originally known as the American Association of Retired Persons, proudly states the organization is “dedicated to people over 50, [but] there is no minimum age to join.” Yes, an 18-year-old can be a member of AARP!

How can we turn our later years into greater years? In this book you will find practical Bible-based wisdom designed to help you wrestle with important issues like these:

- **Aging makes me anxious.** *How should I deal with my fears?*
- **I don’t want to become a grumpy old grouch!** *How can I cultivate my sense of humor as I grow older?*
- **I’m concerned about the next generation.** *How can I maximize my influence as a grandparent?*
- **I believe God speaks through Scripture.** *What does the Bible say about aging?*
- **I wonder about retirement.** *What should I do when my working career ends? How should I handle my finances before and during my retirement years?*
- **I want to keep growing spiritually.** *How can I enjoy a fruitful relationship with God as I grow older?*
- **I don’t want to be irrelevant.** *Where do senior adults fit in the church?*
- **Physical health is important to me.** *How should I take care of my body as I age?*
- **Caregiving worries me.** *What if I need to take care of my spouse or another loved one during my senior years? What if I am the one who needs care?*
- **Widowhood worries me.** *What if my spouse dies? How should I deal with grief when friends and family members pass away?*

- **Death is on my radar.** *What does the Bible say about death and dying? How should I deal with my own mortality and prepare to die well?*

EVEN IF YOU ARE YOUNG NOW, YOU ARE LIKELY (ALTHOUGH NOT GUARANTEED) TO BE OLD YOURSELF SOMEDAY.

Your senior years will arrive faster than you imagine. Time flies like a supersonic jet and a long life isn't guaranteed. James says, "You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14). Peter compares our lives to grass and flowers that spring up green and beautiful but quickly wither and die (1 Peter 1:24-25).

In January 1842, Scottish preacher Robert M'Cheyne wrote, "Call upon the name of the Lord. Your time may be short." M'Cheyne lived only one more year after penning those words. He died of typhus in March 1843 at age 29.

A study by the Stanford Center on Longevity suggests that in the United States, as many as half of today's 5-year-olds can expect to live to the age of 100.¹ No one but God, however, knows exactly how long anyone will live. In the United States, the average lifespan of a man is 73.2 years and 79.1 for a woman.² This data matches well with Psalm 90:10, which says, "Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures."

If God blesses you with a long life, your later years can be greater years.

YOU KNOW OTHERS WHO ARE OLD.

Are there older people in your circle of family and friends? Do you have aging parents or grandparents? Do senior citizens attend your church or live in your neighborhood? "Love your neighbor" includes the older generation.

The Law of Moses instructed younger people to rise to their feet when an older person entered the room. "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God" (Leviticus 19:32). The apostle Paul told Timothy, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). It honors God when we respect, value, and care for the aged.

AMERICA'S AGING POPULATION CREATES NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2030, when the last of the Baby Boomer generation moves into older adulthood, more than 71 million residents over age 65 will live in the United States. That number is expected to rise to more than 85 million by 2050—roughly 22 percent of the overall U.S. population. In other words, more than one in five Americans will be age 65 and older, and about one in three will be over age 50. It's vital for the church to have a robust ministry with children and students as we nurture the next generation, but at the same time, we must not neglect our older neighbors. According to census data, by 2034 older adults will outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history.³ Other studies indicate that people over 50 control the majority of the financial assets of the U.S.⁴

America is becoming more ethnically diverse, and that includes the senior adult population. People of color currently make up about 25 percent of America's older adults, but by 2060 the percentage will approach 50 percent. Experts observe that “declines in marriage, increases in divorce, and lower fertility mean more Baby Boomers will reach age 65 without a spouse or adult child to rely on for care. This will put new and unique stresses on the health care system and challenge how our society currently cares for older adults.”⁵ The approaching wave of retiring Baby Boomers will create significant ministry opportunities for the church in the years ahead.

According to the Pew Research Center, only about half of the Builder generation (those born 1945 or before) and one-third of Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) attend church at least once a week, and less than half of senior adults participate regularly in any kind of personal or group Bible study.⁶ In other words, the majority of our older neighbors have no meaningful connection to a local church. How can we reach and serve this growing number of senior adults? Jesus said, “Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). Another translation describes those fields filled with ripened grain as “white already to harvest.”⁷

White-haired people are part of the Lord's harvest field. They need to be loved in Jesus' name, connected with God's family, and deployed into service.

HEALTHY CHURCHES CARE ABOUT ALL GENERATIONS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ARE OLDER.

Some churches choose to market themselves with taglines like, “We’re not your grandma’s church.” Oh, really? Personally, I want to be part of a church where Grandma and Grandpa are still involved—mentoring young married couples, loving babies in the church nursery, leading small groups, and helping to raise up the next generation of Christ followers, elders, and missionaries to fulfill the Great Commission.

In biblical times, different generations often lived together in the same house. Grandpa and Grandma lived with their children and grandchildren, or they lived nearby. Shouldn’t the church be an intergenerational family, too? Why can’t all generations be part of “God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15)?

I want to be part of a congregation where little kids and older folks interact, share life experiences, learn from each other, worship together, and serve shoulder-to-shoulder across generational lines. Senior adults need the creativity, vision, and enthusiasm of the young, and our younger friends need the experience and wisdom of the old.

We shouldn’t pit the up-and-coming generation against the elderly as if they are rivals. It doesn’t have to be “either/or.” It can be “both/and.” God cares about the young, the old, and everyone in between. Jesus said, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). Doesn’t that include spiritual grandparents and aunts and uncles as well?

I want to be part of a church where “one generation commends your works to another” (Psalm 145:4) as “young men and women, old men and children” all “praise the name of the Lord” (Psalm 148:12-13). We can reach the younger generation without disrespecting older people and treating them as irrelevant. “Pure and faultless” religion includes caring both for needy children and for vulnerable adults . . . “look[ing] after orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27).

Before speaking at a church near Louisville, Kentucky, one Sunday morning, I took a walk near the hotel where I was staying. A big antique car show was in town that weekend. Classic old cars were parked in front of the hotel, right next to late-model cars. Those old and new cars mingled

together in the parking lot illustrate what the church should be like: the old and the young, traveling on a journey together.

The Bible envisions all generations praising the Lord together. I want to be part of a church where older people are not “put out to pasture,” but they are pastored and shepherded like everyone else . . . where older people are not merely coddled and catered to, but are cared for and called to serve . . . where young and old members—centered on Christ, not self—share a common mission to love and serve the Lord.

GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY STAGE OF YOUR LIFE—INCLUDING YOUR OLDER YEARS.

At first glance, Numbers 33 looks like a boring part of the Bible because it lists all the places the Israelites camped before they moved on. The chapter begins, “Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt” (Numbers 33:1). Why should we care if the Hebrews camped at a certain place for a while and then moved to another place? But I am glad this chapter is in the Bible, because it shows every stage of our journey matters to God. He knows

- every school you have attended.
- every job you have had.
- every place you have lived.
- every problem you have faced in the past, and every challenge you are facing now.

He knows if you are a kid in elementary school . . . a young adult getting started in your career . . . or a widow living alone. Every stage of your spiritual journey matters, whether you are a new Christian starting to grow in your faith, or you have been walking with the Lord for years. The Lord knows if your soul is tired . . . if you are facing doubts . . . if your faith is being tested.

Just as he did with the ancient Israelites, God knows where you are camped right now. In fact, he is camped right there with you. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, but the Lord kept leading them toward a land of milk and honey. Their job was to keep

following. God cares about every stage of your journey, and there are wonderful rewards ahead.

YOUR LATER YEARS CAN BE GREATER YEARS.

Senior adulthood can be a time to grow deeper in your faith.

... A time to serve God with joy and delight.

... A time of relational richness when you make new friends and enjoy old friends you have known for years.

... A time for character development as you discover what it means to “be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (Titus 2:2).

... A time to reflect on the past and prepare for a glorious future.

The serviceberry tree my grandkids helped me plant on my sixtieth birthday has grown in my backyard for nearly a decade. It has endured harsh winters and summer droughts. It displays tender pink blossoms in the spring, and its green leaves turn purplish-brown and drop to the ground in the fall. Through all the different seasons, the tree’s roots have kept growing deeper, and the older it gets, the more fruit the tree bears. I want to be like that, too. What about you?