



**FOOD FOR
THE JOURNEY**

WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

» Older Adult Ministry «

» DEVOTIONAL

Scripture

Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

— Joshua 24:15

Kelsey's Story

In my sophomore year of high school I served on a leadership team at my church. We met weekly to plan events for older adults who experienced physical and mental disabilities. Each month we would invite our friends to the church to celebrate life with them. As a leadership team, we planned themed parties that included offering a petting zoo with animals from a nearby farm, a carnival complete with funnel cake and a pie throwing contest, and a Hawaiian luau with hula dancing and lots of fruit and flowers.

The most memorable event for me was our prom night. The whole leadership team was dressed up in gowns and suits. My older friend, Cindy, came in an evening gown as well. We went around together getting our pictures done and dancing on the dance floor. We even rode around the surrounding neighborhood in a limo. In so many ways, it was just like any other high school student's experience of prom except in a church basement and with a group of people that brought an even greater degree of richness of life experience than the most diverse high school. As the night came to an end, Cindy did not want to leave and told me about how she was never able to go to prom in high school. Tears came to both of our eyes. At what could seem like a silly prom party to anyone else, our lives were touched by one another in a deep and profound way. As we parted, we looked forward together to our next event – the fun we would have, the memories we would make, and the chance to deepen our relationship.

Being a part of this youth leadership team gave me the opportunity to connect with older adults who had given so much to our church and community. The older adults we tried to serve were really the ones doing the serving. They offered me so much and taught me about being selfless and live in the moment. I will remember Cindy and the other friends I made for the rest of my life.

Commentary

A popular verse in church family life today, Joshua's proclamation in the passage above provides insight into his unswerving faith. This declaration comes near the conclusion of Joshua's long life and at the end of his speech to the Israelites. In his last appearance to his countrymen, Joshua recounts the history of God's protection and provision for the Israelites through the years. His speech is a renewal of the covenant God made with his people on Mt. Sinai, not unlike a married couple renewing their marriage vows as part of an anniversary celebration. Joshua's declaration that his house will serve the Lord draws an imaginary line in the sand. He leaves the Israelites with a choice: recommit to join Him on the side of God or revert to those gods served by their ancestors.

MORE ON BACK

» Older Adult Ministry «

Joshua's speech is convicting and dramatic. Understanding the context in which he delivers it intensifies its impact. Joshua is well advanced in age, yet he is passionate and very much alive. From his vantage point in life, he is able to reflect on the journey he and his people have been on with God. He also has the power and authority to keep his household on the path of the Lord.

The Lord values those who are older and has called many leaders to serve and lead the Church at later points in their lives. In the Old Testament, God called Abraham to follow him when he was 75. Moses was 80 years old when he was called to speak to Pharaoh. Joshua led Israel from the wilderness to the Promised Land when he was 85 and continued his leadership until he died at 110. In the New Testament, we also see examples of people (Simeon and Anna, Luke 2) who were respected leaders in the church in their older years.

We must not neglect the needs of older adults as churches today expand and welcome new youth and families. Whether the older adults in your church are fiery and passionate or failing in health, they are the very lifeblood of the church. America today has tragically lost much of the respect it once had for its elders. With technological advances like computers, the internet, and cell phones, older adults are likely to be more disconnected than ever before from the world around them. Beginning an older adult ministry is a way to demonstrate the value older adults have in the lives of those they love. Like Joshua, older adults are called by God and deserve the best the church has to offer.

Prayer

Lord of life, by whom the old have led nations and through whom strength has been given that Sarah in old age bore Isaac and Elizabeth in later years bore John the Baptist, speak new life today, through your unchanging Word, to our hearts, and let Your old and young, together, so receive, understand and inwardly digest this Word that we would live forever. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

- Milton, 2009

Question for reflection

- In what ways can you care for the older adults in your community?

References

Hubbard, R. J. (2009). *NIV Application Commentary: Joshua*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
Milton, M. (2009). *Ever-Growing-Ever-Green: A Message on Aging from Psalm 92:14*. <http://www.mikemilton.org/2009/03/02/ever-growing-ever-green-a-message-on-aging-from-psalms-9214>.

Stepping Stones

Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.

Pathways

Learn from the first-hand account of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.

Food for the Journey

A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.