

The Treasure of Old Men

Family Talk-Part 1

Titus 2:1-2

Van Morris writes about three sisters who had lived together for a number of years; their ages were 92, 94 and 97. One night, the 97-year-old drew her bath, got half-way in and then stopped. Finally she yelled out, “Was I getting in or was I getting out?”

The 94-year-old downstairs hollered up, “Wait a minute and I’ll come up and help.” So, she left the kitchen and started up the stairs and half way up, she stopped and just stood there for a moment and then hollered out, “Was I going up or coming down?”

The youngest sister – the 92-year-old was sitting in the kitchen having some got tea, listening to her sisters – one stuck in the tub and one stuck on the stairs; with a smirk on her face she just shook her head and said, “Those sisters of mine – I hope I never get as bad off with memory as they are . . . knock on wood for good luck.”

Then she yelled out, “Now just wait a minute and I’ll come up and help you both out, as soon as I find out who’s at the front door.”¹

That’s where we’re all heading . . . every day a little closer.

And there are a lot of things about growing old that nobody likes.

I have an older brother, also a pastor, who told me on the phone the other day that because of his knee problems – yes he’s got knee problems too – his problems are different than mine – his are because he’s getting old.

Anyway, he told me on the phone that several years ago his doctor had told him that because of his knees he needed to stop jogging and start walking;

but just recently had told him to stop walking for exercise.

No one likes the ever increasing restrictions of aging – the effects of growing older.

In fact, if you’ve walked into a room looking for your glasses only to realize looking in the mirror later on that you already had them on, you know what I mean.

Has that ever happened to you? Me neither.

Are we in denial or what?

The truth is, we’re surrounded by a culture that is in desperate denial . . . and they’re paying a fortune to keep up the appearances of youth.

You have to look young, you have to stay young, you have to dress young and you even need to sound young.

So, the anti-aging industry – not the health industry – but products related to reversing or stopping the process of aging in this country alone is now a \$100 billion dollar a year industry.

And, as one health expert wrote, it’s all about peace of mind.

See, whatever you do, when you get older, don’t look older, don’t sound older . . . in fact, don’t even act older.

According to the Bible, reaching old age is viewed as a fruitful time where you can now return back to your generation the knowledge and wisdom and discernment and balance you’ve gleaned from truth and faith and life itself.

David writes of *bearing fruit in old age (Psalm 92:14)*; growing old enough to turn around and say

with authority, ***“I was young and now I’m old, and I have never seen the righteous forsaken by God . . . (Psalm 37:25).***

And for a culture that is terrified of getting older, it’s time to rethink not only the opportunities, but the personal obligations and responsibilities that come with age.

The Bible does not ask you to avoid old age or even resist it – it welcomes you to it and then actually commands you to take advantage of it.

The Bible venerates gray hair – it considers old age tantamount to wisdom; Solomon wrote that for those who walk with God – their gray head is a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31).

And at the same time the Bible challenges the aging to maximize that wisdom and to maximize their experience and their trial-tested faith for the glory of God and the good of the church.

In a culture that refuses to act its age, you’re about to discover where the Bible actually commands us act our age.

I find it fascinating that Paul’s solution to false teaching and false teachers on the island of Crete was not only sending Titus to these churches to put qualified shepherds into leadership, but to put the rest of the church family on special assignment.

And their special assignment is directly related to either their age or their station in life.

If you know enough about the New Testament Epistles, letters from the Apostles – most of whom were written by the Apostle Paul – Paul will often speak to particular groups of people.ⁱⁱ

Sometimes he speaks directly to men, or women, or husbands, or wives, or fathers or even children.

These are family talks, so to speak.

Well, he’s about to command Titus to carry on his own family talk as he teaches the congregations on this island.

And you quickly discover that Titus is going to first and foremost challenge the older men.

Turn with me to the letter of Paul to Titus and chapter 2.

Now when Paul wrote this letter you hold now in your lap – and I do hope you bring a copy of the Bible with you in here – if you don’t have a copy, someone nearby might lean your way and share – when this letter was originally written, there were no chapter divisions or verse numbers – they were added about **400 years ago** to help Bible students locate the text more quickly.

Most of the time it’s been helpful . . . sometimes it interrupts the flow.

So to get the force of Paul’s next statement as chapter 2 opens, slip back to ***chapter 1 and verse 16. Titus, these false teachers profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him – in other words, they don’t act like they really know God – but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed, but as for you!***

But as for you . . . the word “you” is emphatic – literally, “But you.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In other words – this is what the false teachers are teaching and this is how the false teachers are living . . . but you, Titus – you need ***to speak (v. 1) the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.***

There’s that word, “sound” again – hugaino – which gives us our word, hygiene^{iv} –

In other words, Titus, deliver to them things related to spiritually healthy teaching; pure teaching; wholesome, clean doctrine.

And the present imperative makes this verb – ***to speak or to teach*** – a command that Titus is to do continually.

In other words, the congregation was to receive from their shepherd’s regular and careful pastoral instruction about practical Christian living and about the godly attitudes and actions that should result from believing and obeying sound, wholesome doctrine.^v

Now what’s surprising here is that you might think Paul will launch into an expose of what sound doctrine is.

But you find that chapter 2 isn’t a review of the doctrines of the faith.

Notice the command in ***verse 1*** a little more carefully – Titus – ***But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.***

In other words, call a family meeting of the church and spell out to them the kind of lifestyle that is fitting – from *πρεπω* – that which is appropriate with sound doctrine – that which matches your sound doctrine – that kind of lifestyle and attitude that goes hand in glove with sound doctrine.

So chapter 2 of Titus isn’t about their *beliefs*. It’s all about their *behavior*.

Titus isn’t going to give them a pop quiz on the content of their beliefs; he’s commanded to teach them about the character of the believer.

Paul has already exposed the character and the lifestyle of the Cretans . . . and as you know, Paul basically cleaned their clocks; now he moves on to describe the character and lifestyle of the Christian.

And Paul will be just as blunt and to the point with the Christian as he was with the Cretan – those who lived on this island of Crete.

In this family talk he will address issues like anger, immorality, immaturity, gossip, substance abuse, laziness, priorities, dishonesty, disobedience, back talk, innuendo, and stealing.^{vi}

And here's the point – if you want to be perceived by the Cretans as authentic Christians, these are the kinds of attitudes and actions that match up with the genuine item of uncontaminated Christianity.

And he begins his family talk with the older men.

Maybe you're wondering, who's considered here an "old man." It'll answer that in a minute . . .

Paul delivers 6 different characteristics of what it means to be a godly old man.

1. Temperate

The first word appears in the list – *older men are to be temperate*.

By the way, don't miss the implication of even the first part of this phrase – *older men are to be* . . .

In other word, it's possible to be an older Christian man and *not* be these things.

And older Christian isn't automatically a godly Christian.

Old age doesn't make a Christian man more faithful, more satisfied, more godly, more effective in service to God.^{vii}

You'd think Paul wouldn't have to tell old men to be anything. Surely by now they *are*!

But the fact that they are not only included in this family talk, but referenced first, implies the critical nature that these men, above all the other family members, grow and mature in these areas.

And the first area is simply described as *temperate*.

Originally the word meant, "unmixed with wine – or more woodenly, wineless. It came to refer to people who were sober – discreet, in control of their [passions] words and actions."^{viii}

The word later came to be used for a man who resisted being overindulgent – careless – given to

passions and emotions that flare up and just as quickly die down.

One commentator added that this word also came to describe a man who is free from excess – free from addictions to destructive things, like pornography or illegal drugs.^{ix}

Paul has already described the Cretans as dirty old men – *their minds and their conscience are defiled (1:15)*; now let's do something about it – you used to be a Cretan too . . . let's show them now what it means to be a healthy, wholesome, uncontaminated man – in other words.

Let's show them what it looks like to be a godly old man.

Ok . . . who qualifies as an old man, in the mind of Paul? Who is Paul addressing as this family talk begins?

We know from Greek literature that during the days of Paul and Titus, the word used here in *verse 2 for older men* was used for men who had reached the age of . . . fifty.

So if you've reached 50 – or you're borderline – or you crossed the border years ago – you're an old man.

I didn't call you that, Paul did.

Besides, by the age of 50 there's no need denying it . . . you knew you were getting old anyway.

I've read, you know you're getting old when:

- You recognize the music on the elevator and can sing along.
- You know you're getting old when you've owned clothes for so long they've come back in style twice;

In the mind of Paul, who wrote this letter to Titus, long before the invention of elevators – if you're fifty – you qualify.

Notice what he adds next to the list next in *verse 2. Older men are to be temperate, dignified.*

The word (semnos) means to be worthy of respect. It carries the idea of serious minded.

Don't get the idea that this kind of man is a killjoy who would never laugh . . . who would never have fun . . . far from it.

But it does refer to a man who would never laugh at the wrong thing – a dirty innuendo or a vulgar joke, or the suffering of another person.

It simply means that he's not superficial or shallow . . . there is a depth to him . . .

There is weightiness about his character.^x

The word dignified could be nothing more than a word that refers to a man who has truly grown up.

The Cretan men were adolescent . . . what's adolescent activity? Someone who lives for himself and his own pleasures; someone who views people as pawns to be moved about for their own purposes.

The Cretans didn't want to work, remember? They wanted to be paid and they wanted a life of luxury and independence and all of their needs met on demand. And if they didn't get their way, the temper tantrums would come and everyone will suffer.

In fact, the men on the island of Crete would lie rather than work. They refused to accept responsibility and self-sacrifice and a work ethic beyond their own comfort – in a word, they wanted to stay adolescent.

The implication here in *verse 2* then is that it's possible for an old man to act like a little boy.

Paul is saying to the Christian – show your culture what it means to act your age.

The cultural adolescent is all about his own shallow reflection. Look at my clothes, look at my muscles, my money, my women, my condo, my car, my job . . . look at all my cool stuff.

In other words, “Respect me because of what I have” . . . Paul says, “No, we need older men worthy of respect because of who they are.”

By the way, we happen to be facing an incredible challenge as a culture – in fact, the Western world is experiencing the same phenomena and the data reports are coming in from France, Italy, England, America.

I recently finished reading a book cataloguing much of it, written over a 10 year period of time by a journalist.

The book is startling . . . not written from a Christian perspective, but certainly applicable to the challenge facing the church today. It's entitled, *The Death of the Grownup*.

It's one of the few secular books that I would recommend every parent and pastor – every youth worker – every teacher of any age and certainly every man, to read.

British surveys revealed that today, 46% of adult couples in Great Britain regard their parents' houses as still their real homes; in Italy, nearly one out of three thirty year olds never leave their parent's home to begin with. In fact, one case in Italy caught my attention where a young man successfully sued to make his father responsible to give him financial assistance, not just because he was unemployed but because he couldn't find a job that met with his

personal goals and ambitions; the young man owned his own apartment, didn't live at home and was in his 30's.

Listen to this; more adults in America, ages eighteen–forty-nine now watch the Cartoon Network more than they watch CNN; which tells you how bad CNN is.

But you get my point.

The average video gamer in 1990 was eighteen; today he's going on thirty.

The National Academy of Sciences, back in 2002, redefined adolescence – you know – that period of time between the onset of puberty and adulthood; they officially redefined it now to last between the age of twelve all the way to age thirty.

In fact, the MacArthur Foundation has gone further still, funding a major research project that argues that the transition to male adulthood does not end until age thirty-four.

And this has a truck load of implications.

And what this means is that we have developed a generation, parented by adolescents who's life ambition was all about I, me and mine – and now this next generation coming up, has taken it to a new level, not making the transition out of adolescence into adulthood until into their 30's.

One secular journalist put it – Just look around; we are surrounded with grownups who haven't left childhood. People in their 40's and 50's, one movie producer and former Universal marketing executive wrote, and you can't find any clear demarcation of what's for parents and what's for the kids. Men in particular now dress like their sons – from message-emblazoned T-shirts to chunky athletic shoes, both equally at ease in the baggy rumple of eternal summer camp.

And by the way, I've watched this over the past 10 years impact the ministry – a pastor today doesn't want to stand before his congregation – or sit – looking like a dignified adult – because adult equals old and old is to be resisted, so I'm gonna show up – even here – looking like I've just come from summer camp?

[Why?] Because the last thing you want to be is a mister - - someone who has passed into the dignity of old age – or even adulthood.

One author wrote, our civilization has a near religious devotion to perpetual adolescence.^{xi}

The last thing you want to be – is an older man. The solution isn't sudden.

In fact, Paul knew the solution would be first of all to challenge the older men to begin to pursue these characteristics and then turn around and mentor and disciple the younger men who never had a father.

Or, truth be told, they had an adolescent for a father who had never grown up himself.

I can tell you after spending some time with some of our leaders, we're going to be taking new and aggressive initiatives as a church family to train men in this regard; encouraging older or more spiritually mature men to mentor younger men – in age and/or in the faith. Wednesday morning Quest for men will be exploring with Pastor Wylie what it means to mentor another man; this coming year one of the series that will be taught on Monday night will be along the theme, 17 things I wish my father had taught me. Next month, the men's ministry is bringing Dan Cathy – the CEO of Chick Fil A – a committed believer to speak to the men of our church about standing against the culture as a leader and as a Christian.

Listen, the church ought to be the place – it has to be the place where we have within our family circle older men who can literally provide perhaps for many younger men, the first genuinely mature father figure they've ever encountered.

. . . Older men who are dignified – who are worthy of respect – not because of what they own, but because of who they are.

2. Sensible

Now notice, Paul adds to the list – *the older men must be sensible*. This word is one of Paul's favorite descriptions for the family.

It's the only term that he uses for not only older men, but young women and young men, and then, in *verse 12* he urges the entire family to *live sensibly*.

It refers to a soundness of mind and thinking that shows up in a self-disciplined lifestyle.^{xii} In other words, you do the right thing, not because someone is telling you to, or reminding you, but because it is part of your daily passion.

You get up in the morning and pray, "Lord, I wanna think straight . . . I wanna think Biblically. Give me wisdom to judge issues correctly."

You see, old men, have lived long enough to see just about everything. They're old enough to know that sin promises more than it can produce; old men have handled enough money to know that it doesn't

bring happiness – in fact, it has wings like a bird and can just as easily fly away; old men have owned enough stuff to know how quickly it gets stored in the attic; old men have seen enough sickness and suffering to know that life is fragile and unpredictable.

So relish the moment . . .

They've grown in discernment and balanced thinking – which are characteristics of this word.

Paul writes, *older men must be sensible* – in other words, they must grow tall enough for their feet to touch the ground.

3. Sound in faith, love and perseverance

Finally, Paul adds at the end of *verse 2* that older men must be *sound in their faith, in their love and in their perseverance*.

In other words, they are sound – there's that word again – they are to be healthy and whole and uncontaminated in their faith, love and perseverance.

Sound in faith describes their personal relationship with Jesus Christ – and their ongoing trust in Him.

Sound in love describes their personal relationships with others – their ongoing choice to demonstrate agape – the word Paul uses here – a selfless love and affection for others.

Sound in perseverance simply describes the older man as committed to pursuing these relationships no matter what.^{xiii}

Now, what Christian man wouldn't sign up for soundness in his walk with God and health in his relationships with others? But how many will sign on to the perseverance demanded of him to pursue soundness and purity in faith and love – no matter what.

How many men are looking for a back door out?

Well, I thought the Spirit of God would smooth everything out as soon as I signed up.

Listen, the greatest demonstration of Spirit power was in Jesus Christ, not escaping the cross, but enduring it.

Why? So He could go back to fellowship with His Father, having satisfied His wrath and so that He could have a love relationship with all who believe in Him.

He persevered. Though fully God, He was fully man; and He has become for us the perfect model of

an older Man – who matured much more quickly than His years.

What the family and the church family needs according to Titus 2 first and foremost, are older men, who are in pursuit of Him.

In one of his books, writer Robert Fulgham tells the story of when his daughter was a little girl and gave him a paper bag to take with him to work. When he asked what was in the bag, she answered, “Just some stuff. Take it with you.”

When he sat down for lunch at his desk the next day, he pulled out the paper bag and poured out its contents: two ribbons, three stones, a plastic dinosaur, a pencil stub, a tiny seashell, used lipstick, two chocolate Kisses, and thirteen pennies. He chuckled, finished his lunch, and swept everything off into the wastebasket and went back to work.

When he arrived at home that evening, his daughter asked him where the bag was. “I left it at the office . . . why?”

“Well,” she said, “those are my things in the sack, Daddy. The things I really like. I thought you might like to play with them, but now I want them back.”

When she saw her Dad hesitate, tears welled up in her eyes. “You didn't lose the bag, did you Daddy?”

He said he didn't and that he would bring it home tomorrow. After she went to bed, he raced back to the office.

Fulgham writes:

Molly had given me her treasures . . . all that a seven-year-old held dear. And I missed it. Not just missed it. I had thrown it away. I went back to my office, dumped all the wastebaskets out onto my desk. The janitor came in and asked, “Did you lose something?” “Yeah. My mind! It's probably in there.” When Fulgham found the bag, he uncrumpled it, and filled it again with his daughter's items: two ribbons, three stones, a plastic dinosaur, a pencil stub, a tiny seashell, used lipstick, two chocolate Kisses, and thirteen pennies. He brought them home, sat down with Molly and had her tell him all over again the story behind every treasure in the bag.

Then he writes: To my surprise, Molly gave me the bag once again several days later; same old bag; same stuff inside. But I felt forgiven. Over several months, the bag was given to me from time to time to take with me to the office. It was never clear to me why I did or did not get it on a certain day. I began to think of it as the “Daddy Prize”.

In time, Molly turned her attention to other things . . . she grew up; she gave me the bag one morning and never asked for it back. It sits in my office, left over from when a little child said, “Here; this is the best I've got; this is my treasure; and it's all yours.” I missed it the first time, but it's my bag now.^{xiv}

Paul through Titus is calling a family meeting. And he begins by telling the church that what we need first and foremost are older men who know what to throw away . . . and what to keep.

- What to ignore and what to pursue.
- What to denounce and what to teach.

Men who've grown old . . . and at the same time, they've left adolescence and have grown up.

How can you make sure you're doing the same? Paul challenges Titus to call a family meeting and explain how.

Pursue these qualities of character – and by the way, if you wanna be an old man like this one day, start now.

Go after these qualities of character: temperance, dignity, sensibility, soundness in your faith, health in your love, wholly committed to persevere in all the above.

We need old men who have discovered the nature of true treasure; who are committed to pursuing what truly matters.

And listen, the old men in here who know what true treasure is – *you have become* true treasure to the family of God and to everyone who has the privilege of knowing you and watching you and following you!

*Lord prepare me, to be a sanctuary pure and holy tried and true
And with thanksgiving I'll be a living sanctuary for You.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 5/13/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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- vii MacArthur, p. 73
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- xi Above quotes taken from Diana West, The Death of the Grown-Up (St. Martin's Press, 2007), pp. 1-3
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- xiv Bill White, Paramount, California; source: Robert Fulgham, *It Was On Fire When I Laid Down On It* (Villard, 1990), 19-22