

**Art Of Aging**  
**(Part Three)**  
**"Cultivating Inward & Outward Relationships"**

Adapted from Joan Chittister's *The Gift Of Years. Growing Old Gracefully*. New York: Blue Bridge, 2008, p.p. 143 to 147 & 215 to 218.

**Text:** Psalm 71.14 - 18 (in pew Bible p. 574 / in large print Bible p. 894)

**Intro:**

**-illust. Grow Old Along With Me!**

-3<sup>rd</sup> in a 3 part series on the art of aging:

- sampling Joan Chittister's book *The Gift Of Years*. blended with wisdom from the Psalms.
- art of aging isn't merely being alive but to become more fully alive than ever.
  - dealing with regret & finding meaning.
  - liberation of letting go & exhilaration of moving ahead.

-today's text presents an optimistic picture of the hopeful older Christian person.

- ALWAYS has hope (v. 14):
  - speaks of inner strength and health.
  - praise and witness flow out of our lives (v. v. 14, 15).
  - God's salvation is measureless (v. 15).
- tell of God's mighty acts (v. 16), marvelous deeds (v. 17), power & might (v. 18).
- zealous to pass down spiritual blessings to the next generation (v. 18).

-teaches us the important truth that we may live life to the full at every stage.

- charges the older Christian person to be a model for others.
  - growing older isn't the end of all good and fulfilling things.
  - no need to simply defer to losses and accept a weary state.
  - new purposes are opening up - later life can be a gift, not a burden.

**Take Home Point:**

-art of aging isn't merely being alive but rather to become more fully alive than ever.

- aging well = aware that there is a purpose to growing older.

**1. SOLITUDE – CULTIVATING AN INWARD RELATIONSHIP**

-solitude is not a way of running away from life, from aging, from feeling.

- it is an opportunity to sort them out, air them, get over them, and go on without the burden of yesterday.

-**Carl Jung** (20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss psychologist): The end stage of life, has something to do with making sense out of everything that has gone before it.

-explore your core:

- need to be brave enough to ask hard questions of ourselves:
  - what happened to us during life's journey?
  - why did this happen and how did we handle it?
  - what does it mean to us now?
- need to ask these brave questions in a place of solitude.
  - stop rationalizing & excusing.
  - celebrate those things that made new and better people out of us.

-answers are discovered:

- ideas which we long ago suppressed or didn't know we had.
- we can reflect upon them and either own them or disown them.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We **demolish arguments** and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive** every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be **ready to punish** every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete (2 Corinthians 10.3 – 6).

-in solitude we cry for some kind of settlement.

- is the old anger worth it?
- was the loss really a loss in the long run?
- if we didn't get our own way then in what way did we grow instead?
  - we can become stronger because of the past.

-in solitude we enjoy an ever-present community:

- we find that all the people we have ever known are still very much alive in us.
  - memory of their examples come back to help us.
- we find ourselves back in contact with our past in a new way.
  - we are beyond it now – it is not able to humiliate or hurt us.
  - chart a course of what it will take to make these final years our best ones.

-the life to be lived in the last years ought not to be spoiled by what went before.

- obligation to live well with those around us who make our life possible.
- owe them the best that we have.

A burden of these years is that we fail to understand that solitude is the gift that comes naturally to those who take the time and the space to explore their core.

A blessing of these years is that solitude is their natural state, the gift of reflection that makes the present a contented place to be (Chittister, p. 147).

## 2. LEGACY – CULTIVATING OUTWARD RELATIONSHIPS

-because of solitude the older Christian person:

- ALWAYS has hope (v. 14):
  - speaks of inner strength and health.
  - praise and witness flow out of our lives (v. v. 14, 15).
  - God's salvation is measureless (v. 15).

-as a result of solitude, the older Christian person is zealous to:

- tell of God's mighty acts (v. 16), marvelous deeds (v. 17), *power & might* (v. 18).
- pass down spiritual blessings to the next generation (v. 18).

-aging well = building a positive legacy to leave.

- building a life that enriches others.
- legacy is often immaterial – touching those who will live on after you are gone.
- some people leave a negative legacy – *stamped on the hearts of those who knew you*.

-Seneca (1st century AD Roman stoic philosopher): Nothing is more dishonorable than the old, heavy with years, who have no other evidence of having lived long except age.

-inventory of legacy:

- attitude toward the world.
  - remembered for whether or not we inspired in others a love for life and an openness to all who lived it with us.
    - smiles or frowns, laughter or complaints, *kindness or selfishness*.
- touch-stones of value system.
  - ecology, race, people skills, younger generations, estate, religion.

-paradigm shift:

- not too late to erase some old memories and create new ones.
- not too late to start living in a more balanced fashion.
  - shift from accumulation and consumption to giving and sharing.
  - shift from pettiness and engrained prejudices to loving others and God.

A burden of these years is to give into the thought that personal spiritual growth is no longer an issue for us and so leave the world a legacy of incompleteness.

A blessing of these years is to have the time to complete in ourselves what has been neglected all these years, so that the legacy we leave to others is equal to the full potential within us (Chittister, p. 218).

## Conclusion:

### 1. Know what God wants.

-to be a hopeful older Christian person.

- ALWAYS has hope (v. 14):
  - speaks of inner strength and health.
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- tell of God's mighty acts (v. 16), marvelous deeds (v. 17), *power & might* (v. 18).
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-art of aging isn't merely being alive but rather to become more fully alive than ever.

- aging well = aware that there is a purpose to growing older.
  - dealing with regret & finding meaning.
  - liberation of letting go / exhilaration of moving ahead.

### 2. Know how to do what God wants.

-solitude = a monastery.

- at times, aloneness is a conscious choice.
  - like the freedom of being on their own.
  - like having a place they can call completely their own.

-more often, aloneness is not chosen – it is thrust upon us.

- knee-jerk reaction = being in isolation.
  - cut off by circumstances over which we have no control.
  - separation & alienation.

-solitude = something quite different.

- chosen for the sake of the soul / concentrate on the inside.
  - nothing can change – except the way we look at it.
  - if there is something in us that has yet to be grappled with, this is the grappling hour.

A blessing of these years is that solitude is their natural state, the gift of reflection that makes the present a contented place to be (Chittister, p. 147).

A blessing of these years is to have the time to complete in ourselves what has been neglected all these years, so that the legacy we leave to others is equal to the full potential within us (Chittister, p. 218).

### 3. Know that you will do it.

**-Closing Hymn:** #47 God Will Take Care Of You (all verses).

## **Grow Old Along With Me!**

Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith "A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half;  
Trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"  
(Robert Browning)