



YOUR AGE

WILL NOT STOP

YOUR

DREAMS

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Forward

Timothy was a young pastor. It would have been easy for older Christians to look down on him because of his youth. He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity.

Regardless of your age, God can use you. Whether you are young or old, don't think of your age as a handicap. Live so others can see Christ in you.

When Joshua was an old man, the Lord said to him, "You are growing old, and much land remains to be conquered.

Joshua was getting old—he was between 85 and 100 years of age at this time.

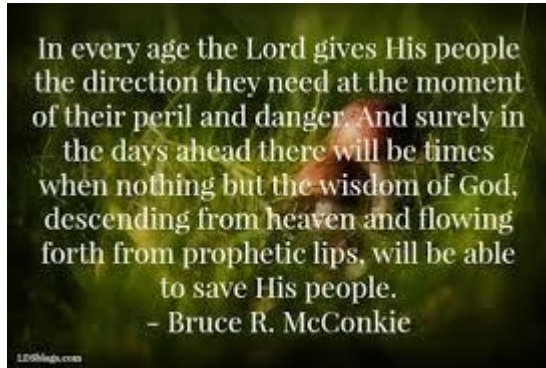
God, however, still had work for him to do. Our culture often glorifies the young and strong and sets aside those who are older.

Yet older people are filled with the wisdom that comes with experience. They are very capable of serving if given the chance and should be encouraged to do so.

Believers are never allowed to retire from God's service. Those past retirement age should not assume that age alone disqualifies or excuses them from serving God.

What ever your age, you are still the temple of the Holy Spirit. God needs you to stand for him all the days of your life. Your reward will be great.

Chapter 1



How did Bible people live so long?

Genesis 5:25-27

When Methuselah was 187 years old, his son Lamech was born. After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. He died at the age of 969.

Some believe that the ages listed here were lengths of family dynasties rather than ages of individual men. Those who think these were actual ages offer three explanations:

- (1) The human race was more genetically pure in this early time period, so there was less disease to shorten life spans;
- (2) No rain had yet fallen on the earth, and the expanse of water "above" (Genesis 1:7) kept out harmful cosmic rays and shielded people from environmental factors that hasten aging;
- (3) God gave people longer lives so they would have time to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Our responsibility to honor the elderly

Leviticus 19:32

"Show your fear of God by standing up in the presence of elderly people and showing respect for the aged. I am the Lord.

Old age not a barrier to being used by God.

Joshua 13:1

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John 6:8-9

Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?"

The disciples are contrasted with the youngster who brought what he had. They certainly had more resources than the boy, but they knew they didn't have enough, so they didn't give anything at all.

The boy gave what little he had, and it made all the difference.

If we offer nothing to God, he will have nothing to use. But he can take what little we have and turn it into something great.

In performing his miracles, Jesus usually preferred to work through people. Here he took what a young child offered and used it to accomplish one of the most spectacular miracles recorded in the Gospels.

Age is no barrier to Christ. Never think you are too young or old to be of service to him.

1 Tim. 4:12

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

Timothy was a young pastor. It would have been easy for older Christians to look down on him because of his youth.

He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity. Regardless of your age, God can use you. Whether you are young or old, don't think of your age as a handicap. Live so others can see Christ in you.

Age is not a criterion for wisdom.

2 Chron. 34:3

During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David.

Then in the twelfth year, he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images.

In Josiah's day, boys were considered men at age 12.

By 16, Josiah understood the responsibility of his office. Even at this young age, he showed greater wisdom than many of the older kings who came before him because he had decided to seek the Lord God and his wisdom.

Don't let your age disqualify you from serving God.

Chapter 2

The elderly have great value.

Psalm 92:14

Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green.

Palm trees are known for their long life. To flourish like palm trees means to stand tall and to live long. The cedars of Lebanon grew to 120 feet in height and up to 30 feet in circumference; thus, they were solid, strong, and immovable.

The psalmist saw believers as upright, strong, and unmoved by the winds of circumstance. Those who place their faith firmly in God can have this strength and vitality.

Luke 2:36

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, and was very old

She was a widow, for her husband had died when they had been married only seven years.

Although Simeon and Anna were very old, they had never lost their hope that they would see the Messiah. Led by the Holy Spirit, they were among the first to bear witness to Jesus. In the Jewish culture, elders were respected, so because of Simeon and Anna's age, their prophecies carried extra weight.

Our society, however, sometimes values youthfulness over wisdom, and potential contributions by the elderly are often ignored.

As Christians, we should reverse those values wherever we can. Encourage older people to share their wisdom and experience. Listen carefully when they speak. Offer them your friendship and help them find ways to continue to serve God.

Anna was called a prophetess, indicating that she was unusually close to God.

Prophets did not necessarily predict the future. Their main role was to speak for God, proclaiming his truth.

Those older than you can give good advice.

Proverbs 6:20-23

My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's teaching.

Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck.

Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you.

For these commands and this teaching is a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life.

Seek God while still young.

Eccles. 11:9-10

Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.

So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, still faces the threat of meaninglessness.

We often hear people say, “It doesn’t matter.” But many of your choices will be irreversible—they will stay with you for a lifetime. What you do when you’re young *does* matter. Enjoy life now, but don’t do anything physically, morally, or spiritually that will prevent you from enjoying life when you are old.

Eccles. 12:1

Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living.

A life without God can produce a bitter, lonely, and hopeless old age.

A life centered on God is fulfilling; it will make the “days of trouble”—when disabilities, sickness, and handicaps cause barriers to enjoying life—satisfying because of the hope of eternal life.

Being young is exciting. But the excitement of youth can become a barrier to closeness with God if it makes young people focus on passing pleasures instead of eternal values.

Make your strength available to God when it is still yours—during your youthful years. Don't waste it on evil or meaningless activities that become bad habits and make you callous. Seek God now.

Jesus began his ministry at age 30.

Luke 3:23

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry. Jesus was known as the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Heli.

Imagine the Savior of the world working in a small-town carpenter's shop until he was 30 years old! It seems incredible that Jesus would have been content to remain in Nazareth all that time, but he patiently trusted the Father's timing for his life and ministry.

Thirty was the prescribed age for priests to begin their ministry (Numbers 4:3). Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving the king of Egypt (Genesis 41:46), and David was 30 years old when he began to reign over Judah (2 Samuel 5:4). Age 30, then, was a good time to begin an important task in the Jewish culture.

Like Jesus, we need to resist the temptation to jump ahead before receiving the Spirit's direction. Are you waiting and wondering what your next step should be? Don't jump ahead—trust God's timing.

Heli may have been Joseph's father-in-law. If that were the case, this would be Mary's genealogy that Luke may have received personally from her. It is fitting that Luke would show Mary's genealogy because of the prominence he gives women in his Gospel.

Matthew's genealogy goes back to Abraham and shows that Jesus was related to all Jews (Matthew 1).

Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam, showing that Jesus is related to all human beings.

This is consistent with Luke's picture of Jesus as the Savior of the whole world.

Respect of elders

Ephes. 6:3

And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, "you will live a long life, full of blessing."

There is a difference between obeying and honoring. To obey means to do as one is told; to honor means to respect and love. Children are not commanded to disobey God in obeying their parents.

Adult children are not asked to be subservient to domineering parents. Children are to obey while under their parents' care, but the responsibility to honor parents is for life.

If our faith in Christ is real, it will usually prove itself at home, in our relationships with those who know us best.

Children and parents have a responsibility to each other.

Children should honor their parents even if the parents are demanding and unfair.

Parents should care gently for their children, even if the children are disobedient and unpleasant. Ideally, of course, Christian parents and Christian children will relate to each other with thoughtfulness and love.

This will happen if both parents and children put the others' interests above their own—that is, if they submit to one another.

Some societies honor their elders. They respect their wisdom, defer to their authority, and pay attention to their comfort and happiness. This is how Christians should act. Where elders are respected, long life is a blessing, not a burden to them.

The purpose of parental discipline is to help children grow, not to exasperate and provoke them to anger or discouragement (see also Col. 3:21).

Parenting is not easy—it takes lots of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring manner.

But frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Instead, parents should act in love, treating their children as Jesus treats the people he loves.

This is vital to children's development and to their understanding of what Christ is like.

Chapter 3

Dealing with a variety of ages in the church.

Titus 2:1-8

But as for you, promote the kind of living that reflects right teaching.

Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have strong faith and be filled with love and patience.

Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that is appropriate for someone serving the Lord. They must not go around speaking evil of others and must not be heavy drinkers. Instead, they should teach others what is good.

These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to take care of their homes, to do well, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God.

In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely in all they do. And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good deeds of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.

Let your teaching be so correct that it can't be criticized. Then those who want to argue will be ashamed because they won't have anything bad to say about us.

Having people of all ages in the church makes it strong, but it also brings potential for problems. Paul gave Titus counsel on how to help various groups of people.

The older people should teach the younger by words *and* by example. This is how values are passed on from generation to generation. Does your church carry out this basic function?

Self-control was an important aspect in early Christianity.

The Christian community was made up of people from differing backgrounds and viewpoints, making conflict inevitable.

Christians existed in a pagan and often hostile world. To stay above reproach, men and women needed wisdom and discernment to be discreet, and to master their wills, tongues, and passions so that Christ would not be dishonored.

Women who were new Christians were to learn how to have harmony in the home by watching older women who had been Christians for some time.

We have the same need today. Younger wives and mothers should learn to live in a Christian manner—loving their husbands and caring for their children—through observing exemplary women of God.

If you are of an age or position where people look up to you, make sure that your example is motivating younger believers to live in a way that honors God.

Bible is relevant to all ages

1 John 2:12-14

I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been forgiven because of Jesus.

I am writing to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young because you have won your battle with Satan.

I have written to you, children, because you have known the Father.

I have written to you who are mature because you know Christ, the one who is from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young because you are strong with God's word living in your hearts, and you have won your battle with Satan.

John was writing to believers of all ages, his “dear children” who had experienced forgiveness through Jesus. The older men (“fathers”) were mature in the faith and had a long-standing relationship with Christ.

The young men had struggled with Satan’s temptations and had won. The boys and girls had learned about Christ and were just beginning their spiritual journey.

Each stage of life in the Christian pilgrimage builds upon the other. As children learn about Christ, they grow in their ability to win battles with temptation.

As young adults move from victory to victory, they grow in their relationship with Christ.

Older adults, having known Christ for years, have developed the wisdom needed to teach young people and start the cycle all over again.

Chapter 4

GLORIES OF age

Job 12:12

"Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.

Job 5:26

"You will come to the grave in full vigor, like the stacking of grain in its season.

Eliphaz was correct—it is a blessing to be disciplined by God when we do wrong. Eliphaz's advice, however, did not apply to Job.

As we know from the beginning of the book, Job's suffering was not a result of some great sin.

We sometimes give people excellent advice only to learn that it does not apply to them and is therefore not very helpful.

All who offer counsel from God's Word should take care to thoroughly understand a person's situation *before* giving advice.

Eliphaz's words in Job 5:17-18 show a view of discipline that has been almost forgotten: pain can help us grow.

These are good words to remember when we face hardship and loss.

Because Job did not understand why he suffered, his faith in God had a chance to grow. On the other hand, we must not make Eliphaz's mistake.

God does not eliminate all hardship when we are following him closely, and good behavior is not always rewarded by prosperity.

Rewards for good and punishment for evil are in God's hands and given out according to his timetable. Satan's ploy is to get us to doubt God's goodwill toward us.

Proverbs 16:31

A gray head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness.

The Hebrews believed that a long life was a sign of God's blessing; therefore, gray hair and old age were good. While young people glory in their strength, old people can rejoice in their years of experience and practical wisdom. Gray hair is not a sign of disgrace to be covered over; it is a crown of splendor. As you deal with older people, treat them with respect.

Psalms 92:12-15

The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green,

Palm trees are known for their long life. To flourish like palm trees means to stand tall and to live long.

The cedars of Lebanon grew to 120 feet in height and up to 30 feet in circumference; thus, they were solid, strong, and immovable. The psalmist saw believers as upright, strong, and unmoved by the winds of circumstance. Those who place their faith firmly in God can have this strength and vitality.

Serving God is a matter of choice

Joshua 24:15

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

The people had to decide whether they would obey the Lord, who had proven his trustworthiness, or obey the local gods, which were only man-made idols.

It's easy to slip into a quiet rebellion—going about life in your own way. But the time comes when you have to choose who or what will control you.

The choice is yours. Will it be God, your own limited personality, or another imperfect substitute? Once you have chosen to be controlled by God's Spirit, reaffirm your choice every day.

In taking a definite stand for the Lord, Joshua again displayed his spiritual leadership. Regardless of what others decided, Joshua had

made a commitment to God, and he was willing to set the example of living by that decision.

The way we live shows others the strength of our commitment to serving God.

Age brings both strength and honor

Proverbs 20:29

The glory of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is their gray hair.

John 8:9

When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

When Jesus said that only someone who had not sinned should throw the first stone, the leaders slipped quietly away, from oldest to youngest.

Evidently the older men were more aware of their sins than the younger. Age and experience often temper youthful self-righteousness.

But whatever your age, take an honest look at your life. Recognize your sinful nature, and look for ways to help others rather than hurt them.

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Showing disrespect is displeasing to God

2 Kings 2:2-24

Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!"

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

This mob of youths was from Bethel, the religious center of idolatry in the northern kingdom, and they were probably warning Elisha not to speak against their immorality as Elijah had done.

They were not merely teasing Elisha about his baldness, but showing severe disrespect for Elisha's message and God's power.

They may also have jeered because of their disbelief in the chariot of fire that had taken Elijah.

When Elisha cursed them, he did not call out the bears himself. God sent them as a judgment for their callous unbelief.

These young men jeered at God's messenger and paid for it with their lives.

Making fun of religious leaders has been a popular sport through the ages. To take a stand for God is to be different from the world and vulnerable to verbal abuse.

When we are cynical and sarcastic toward religious leaders, we are in danger of mocking not just the person, but also the spiritual message.

While we are not to condone the sin that some leaders commit, we need to pray for them, not laugh at them. True leaders, those who follow God, need to be heard with respect and encouraged in their ministry.

1 Timothy 5:1-3

Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are widows indeed;

The church should support those who have no families and should also help the elderly, young, disabled, ill, or poverty-stricken with their emotional and spiritual needs. Often families who are caring for their own helpless members have heavy burdens.

They may need extra money, a listening ear, a helping hand, or a word of encouragement. Interestingly, those who are helped often turn around and help others, turning the church into more of a caring community.

Don't wait for people to ask. Take the initiative and look for ways to serve them.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

Timothy was a young pastor. It would have been easy for older Christians to look down on him because of his youth. He had to earn the respect of his elders by setting an example in his speech, life, love, faith, and purity.

Regardless of your age, God can use you. Whether you are young or old, don't think of your age as a handicap. Live so others can see Christ in you.

Proverbs 23:22

Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Acts 10:34

Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,

Perhaps the greatest barrier to the spread of the gospel in the first century was the Jewish-Gentile conflict. Most of the early believers were Jewish, and to them it was scandalous even to think of associating with Gentiles.

But God told Peter to take the gospel to a Roman, and Peter obeyed despite his background and personal feelings. (Later Peter struggled with this again—see Galatians 2:11-14.)

God was making it clear that the Good News of Christ is for everyone! We should not allow any barrier—language, culture, prejudice, geography, economic level, or educational level—to keep us from telling others about Christ.

In every nation there are hearts restless for God, ready to receive the gospel—but someone must take it to them. Seeking God is not enough—people must find him. How then shall seekers find God without someone to point the way? Is God asking you to show someone the way to him? (See Romans 10:14-15.)

James 2:1-13

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

James argues against favoritism and for the necessity of good deeds. He presents three principles of faith:

- (1) Commitment is an essential part of faith. You cannot be a Christian simply by affirming the right doctrines or agreeing with Biblical facts (James 2:19). You must commit your mind and heart to Christ.
- (2) Right actions are the natural by-products of true faith. A genuine Christian will have a changed life (James 2:18).

- (3) Faith without good deeds doesn't do anybody any good—it is useless (James 2:14-17). James's teachings are consistent with Paul's teaching that we receive salvation by faith alone. Paul emphasizes the purpose of faith—to bring salvation. James emphasizes the results of faith—a changed life.

James condemns acts of favoritism. Often we treat a well-dressed, impressive-looking person better than someone who looks shabby. We do this because we would rather identify with successful people than with apparent failures.

The irony, as James reminds us, is that the supposed winners may have gained their impressive life-style at our expense.

In addition, the rich find it difficult to identify with the Lord Jesus, who came as a humble servant.

If we are easily impressed by status, wealth, or fame, or partial to the “haves” while ignoring the “have nots” this attitude is sinful.

God views all people as equals, and if he favors anyone, it is the poor and the powerless. We should follow his example.

Why is it wrong to judge a person by his or her age or economic status?

Wealth may indicate intelligence, wise decisions, and hard work. On the other hand, it may mean only that a person had the good fortune of being born into a wealthy family.

Or it can even be the sign of greed, dishonesty, and selfishness.

By honoring someone just because he or she dresses well, we are making appearance more important than character.

Sometimes we do this because

- (1) Poverty makes us uncomfortable; we don't want to face our responsibilities to those who have less than we do;
- (2) We want to be wealthy too, and we hope to use the rich person as a means to that end;
- (3) We want the rich person to join our church and help support it financially. All these motives are selfish; they view neither the rich nor the poor person as a human being in need of fellowship.

If we say that Christ is our Lord, then we must live as he requires, showing no favoritism and loving all people regardless of whether they are rich or poor.

We are often partial to the rich because we mistakenly assume that riches are a sign of God's blessing and approval. But God does not promise us earthly rewards or riches; in fact,

Christ calls us to be ready to suffer for him and give up everything in order to hold on to eternal life (Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 19:28-30; Luke 12:14-34; Romans 8:15-21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

We will have untold riches in eternity if we are faithful in our present life (Luke 6:35; John 12:23-25; Galatians 6:7-10; Titus 3:4-8).

When James speaks about the poor, he is talking about those who have no money and also about those whose simple values are despised by much of our affluent society.

Perhaps the “poor” people prefer serving to managing, human relationships to financial security, peace to power.

This does not mean that the poor will automatically go to heaven and the rich to hell. Poor people, however, are usually more aware of their powerlessness. Thus it is often easier for them to acknowledge their need for salvation.

One of the greatest barriers to salvation for the rich is pride. For the poor, bitterness can often bar the way to acceptance of salvation.

Whether rich or poor we are accepted by God if we make him our Lord.

Chapter 5

The kingdom of heaven belong to the children

Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

The disciples must have forgotten what Jesus had said about children (Matthew 18:4-6). Jesus wanted little children to come because he loves them and because they have the kind of attitude needed to approach God.

He didn't mean that heaven is only for children, but that people need childlike attitudes of trust in God. The receptiveness of little children was a great contrast to the stubbornness of the religious leaders who let their education and sophistication stand in the way of the simple faith needed to believe in Jesus.

Isaiah 46:4

I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.

Cyrus would carry out God's judgment against Babylon. Bel was the chief deity of the Babylonians; Nebo was the god of science and learning.

These “gods,” however, needed animals and people to carry them around and could not even save themselves from being taken into captivity. They had no power at all. In contrast to gods who must be hauled around by people, our God created us and cares for us. His love is so enduring that he will care for us throughout our lifetime and even through death.

Psalms 92:14

They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green

Psalms 71:9

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.

Job 5:26

"You will come to the grave in full vigor, like the stacking of grain in its season.

Chapter 6

Grandchildren are a crown to the old

Proverbs 17:6

Grandchildren are the crowns of old men, and the glory of sons is their fathers.

Psalm 91:16

I will satisfy them with a long life and give them my salvation."

Psalm 90:12

Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom.

Realizing that life is short helps us use the little time we have more wisely and for eternal good. Take time to number your days by asking, "What do I want to see happen in my life before I die? What small step could I take toward that purpose today?"

Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.

Deut. 5:16

Honor your father and mother, as the Lord your God commanded you. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God will give you.

Obedying our parents is our main task when we are young, but honoring them should continue even beyond their death.

One way to honor parents is to provide for them in times of financial need or when they are ill and unable to care for themselves.

Perhaps the best way to honor them is to pass on their godly values to our children.

Honoring involves all that sons and daughters do with their lives—the way they work and talk, the values they hold, and the morals they practice.

Regardless of our age, we must give respect to gain respect, and all the glory of God.

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