

# Does Your Church Have Too Many Old People?

(Job 12:12-13)

- Introduction:
1. Ills. Of a man who was invited to church, but he declined saying, “You all have too many old people at your church.”
  2. Confession time...haven’t we all said or thought something like this when looking for a church home or while on vacation?
  3. We almost rejected a good work that lasted 21 years because of all the “old people” in the congregation.
  4. Within the past week I had someone throw off on our congregation because we were an “old congregation” and liked to do things in “old school ways.”
    - a. Personally, I’ve never seen such a demographically balanced congregation.
    - b. It was apparent that he knew neither the make up nor the works in which we are engaged.
  5. The more I analyzed this man’s statement, the more convinced I became of the truth that instead of viewing an elderly segment as a negative, it should be viewed as a positive. And instead of rejecting a congregation because of an elderly segment, we should be making the elderly segment a requirement.

## I. Balance Needed

- A. Many people’s knee-jerk reaction to seeing a congregation with older people is one of concern.
  1. Are they stuck in the past?
  2. Will we be marginalized?
  3. Will they have anything for our children?
  4. Will they be wedded to traditions?
- B. These are valid questions and I am not saying they don’t have merit or that one asking them should feel guilty.
- C. What I am saying is that these are fair questions, but they are too narrow; our perspective needs to be broadened to consider other factors.

## II. A Broader Perspective

- A. Conflicting Values.
  1. One should feel concern if he doesn’t see elderly people.
  2. While our culture de-values advanced age, the Bible elevates it.
    - a. (Proverbs 16:31) The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.
    - b. (Proverbs 20:29) The glory of young men is their strength and the splendor of old men is their gray head.
    - c. (Leviticus 19:32) You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord your God.
    - d. (1 Timothy 3:6) Not a novice...
  3. To walk with the Lord for a long time is a good thing, a blessing, and of great value (Genesis 5:22).
  4. Hindsight, experience, years of study, seasoned judgment are all desirable traits that cannot be possessed except through age; and it was these qualities that allowed the elderly to sit at the gate of the city in Old

Testament times and to also lead the church today.

- a. (Psalm 71:18) Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come.
  - b. The psalmist wanted to live long enough to share what he had learned through experience.
5. Look what happens when this hierarchy is ignored.
    - a. (Isaiah 3:12) As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them...
    - b. Both age and gender were turned on their head and to their shame.
    - c. (1 Kings 12:6-13) Rehoboam.
  6. (Romans 1:18-32).
    - a. Idolatry (v. 25)- worship the creature rather than the creator.
    - b. Homosexuality (vs. 26-27)- exchanged the man for the woman vice versa.
    - c. Disobedient to parents (v. 30) - disrespected parent/child hierarchy.
  7. From a biblical perspective, the fact that the elderly are not drawn to a church or ministry is not a selling point, but should be viewed as a red flag.
- B. Conflicting Goals.
1. (Romans 12:3).
  2. Our culture is one of entitlement; what's in it for me.
  3. Few find value in serving, giving, building, sacrificing, and staying.
  4. Such an attitude stands in contrast with the attitude of Jesus (Matthew 20:28).
  5. How do churches grow?
    - a. Do they drop down from heaven, fully staffed and demographically balanced?
    - b. Or do they grow into that?
  6. With a little twist, does this question asked by President Kennedy ring hollow in our culturally conditioned ears today? - "Ask not what your church can do for you; ask what you can do for your church."
- C. Conflicting Groups.
1. For all their advantages, there is a downside to carving up the church into groups (e.g. singles, youth, seniors, college, married, etc.).
  2. (Matthew 12:25).
    - a. Note carefully what I said and did not say.
    - b. The passage is not against divisions, but divisions that are "against itself."
  3. These sub-groups in a congregation can be helpful, but when they compete, scheme, and despise the other, they become sinful.
  4. (Nehemiah 8:2)
  5. There are many abstract lessons that can only be learned by being together.
- Conclusion:
1. May God help us to have a balanced and biblical view of the elderly in the church.
  2. May we celebrate the strength of youth and rise before the gray-head, and honor the presence of the elderly (Lev. 19:32).
  3. In so doing, we will become a formidable church (strong and wise) in our opposition to error and our propagation of the truth.