



Older
People's
Ministries

Ageing Well



Generally society views growing older negatively and something to be feared. This resource is designed to help people understand the beauty of growing older and how to use the knowledge and skills acquired over the years to view ageing positively, giving time to explore new opportunities for ministry and growth.

**'They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green. Psalm 92:14**

3 Part Resource for those in retirement

Embrace

Embracing who you are
now

Equip

Equipping yourself
with the tools you
need

Energise

Energising & influencing
those around you

3 Sessions looking at
wisdom, gifts and skills
in older age which can
open new opportunities
in retirement

Can be used separately
or as a retreat resource

*'See I am doing
a new thing'
Isaiah 43:19*

This resource is written as a script for you to use with a group of older people, those of retirement age and beyond

Introduction

Today you are one day older than you were yesterday. We all are! We are all ageing, every day is an absolute blessing and to be growing older really is a gift that is not afforded to everyone. So how we embrace our everyday lives as God's people is so important and as we share time together today let us take hold of this verse from *The Message version of Romans 12:1-2*:

'Here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going to work and walking around life and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you and quickly respond to it.'

We are reminded to embrace what God does for us. Growing older has its challenge and you only have to turn on the TV to see adverts for lotions and potions that will keep us looking younger. You can use as many lotions as you want but actually, why would we want to remain young? Growing older in other cultures is seen as a good thing, yet we here in the West view growing older as a negative thing.

Why would we want to dismiss the wisdom we have gained with each passing day, week, month and year? Why would we want to turn back time and not use the lessons we have learnt?

This session is going to help us to embrace who we are right now, today, and not see growing older as a limitation but as an amazing gift and to use the opportunities that come our way each day, whether they are absolutely wonderful or extremely difficult.



Session 1

Embrace who you are

Activity 1

Think about the gifts and talents you possess and the different roles you play. For example are you a daughter/husband/friend/cousin? Are you funny/creative/practical etc.? What do you stand for? What are your values? What brings you joy? Using the 'I am...' sheet provided take some moments to create a list of who you are. Embrace who you are and as you do, consider the words from Psalm 139:14 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

As the years pass we learn new things, our wisdom grows, the experiences we live through give us insight and learning that without we would not be who we are today.

Activity 2

In small groups discuss what you have learnt in the past 30 years. Take yourself back to 1989. That might sound a huge task but think about the roles you have played perhaps in employment, life circumstances that have changed your thinking, technology, education, grief...

All these things and others beside all play a part in our learning. When you have discussed this, use the chart to plot what you have learned over the past 30 years (only assign names to the learning if people are happy to do so).



Session 1 - Teaching

Embrace who you are

As we mentioned earlier we may sometimes say 'If I could turn back time'.

Does anyone know who sang the song which was in the charts some years ago with the same question, 'If I could turn back time'?

(Answer - Cher)

What year was it?

(Answer – 1989)

(You could all do a little rendition to make you smile or play the song)

The words are interesting as they say 'If I could turn back time, if I could find a way, I'd take back those words that hurt you and you'd stay.' Basically we are hearing a love story here where regret says that should another path have been taken a different outcome would be the present reality. But none of us can turn back time, none of us can change the outcome of a love story, the outcome of a certain employment, the outcome of family changes, the outcome of anything in the past because we live in the reality of today and our present circumstances.

Lessons learned; lessons which make us who we are today. Jeremiah 29:11 says '*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*' Even through the sad and discouraging times of life, we believe that God has a plan and will bring us to a place that he knows is best for us, hard as that can be to believe at times. We need to remember Jeremiah's words of comfort.

Think back to the Activities we have taken part in so far today. Take a moment to thank God for who you are now, not who you once were but who you are today, with the skills, the gifts, the wisdom and knowledge that you hold today. Thank God for the lessons you have learned which allow you to make decisions today and in the future days ahead. Embrace who God has created you to be. We read in Esther 4:14 familiar words from Esther's uncle who says 'And who knows if you have come to your royal position for such a time as this.' Esther had been prepared for that moment in her life where God was going to use her to save a nation. Now hear God's words to you say the same... 'And I know that you have come to your position, here today, for such a time as this.'

As we age and grow older God wants to use us, but we can only allow him to do that fully when we accept who we are and embrace the age we find ourselves at.



Session 2

Equip yourself with the tools for the task

Major Yvonne Field is known throughout the Salvation Army world for her gift of music and song writing. Yvonne has written many beautiful pieces of music that have become well known and loved by many. Yvonne shares her story with us of how she has equipped herself with the tools for the task God called her to:

'It was whilst on College Staff at the William Booth Training College that the Principal of the College prayed a prayer over all his staff. He prayed that gifts would be released in us. A few weeks later I had a little tune going round in my head and I put pen to paper. It was a little Christmas tune and the first one I had ever written. I took it to the Training Principal, Lt. Col Norman Howe who said;

"We thank God for this new song, who knows it may be the start of a new ministry."

I realised I had to equip myself with the tools of the task as God had given me a new gift. I was in my late 30's at the time. I armed myself with pens, paper and Tippex! I sent myself onto a counterpoint and harmony course at a London College, I listened to as many different genre of music as I could, my favourite being film scores where I learned about orchestration and how you can create different tones and colours within a piece of music.'

It is amazing to think that the music and songs many know so well started by Yvonne being prayed over for gifts to be released in her and a little Christmas tune was where it all began. Yet if Yvonne had not embraced who God had created her to be we would be void of the beautiful music she has penned. If Yvonne had not embraced this gift and equipped herself with the correct tools to grow her gift who knows if we would be singing those beautiful words *'Lord if your presence does not go with us'* (SASB No.1031)

However, this is not the only time that Yvonne has embraced who she is, the age she is at and the gifts given to her.



(Yvonne Field's story continued...)

'I took up horse riding when Ian, my husband, bought me six horse riding lessons for my 65th birthday. As a child I helped out at a local stable but could never afford lessons. Ian had no idea what he had let himself in for giving me such a super gift!

I now volunteer at the yard at least three days a week and look after Jay, a 21 year old horse who belongs to the yard owner. Last year he asked me to "take her on" which meant giving lots of TLC and regular exercise. I love her to bits. She has now gone into retirement so we are two lovely old retired girls enjoying each other's company. In exchange, I do some yard jobs, make lots of brews for the staff and help out with the school ponies! What is even more amazing is how God has opened an incredible door of opportunity of friendship and ministry.

Often I am asked questions about faith. I've been asked to pray for someone, I've listened while someone shares a concern, burden or anxiety. Some of the staff have attended our Christmas concerts at Sale too. I'm also told that the language at the yard has cleaned up somewhat since I've been around which is interesting as I've never reacted to the occasional colourful expression!

It's challenging, thrilling and a great privilege to enjoy friendship with lovely people of all ages. God is good!'

What an amazing story! When Yvonne was asked how she equipped herself for horse riding at the age of 65 she replied, *'I watched YouTube videos on how to tie knots, clean the yard and anything else I could get my hands on that helped me to learn! I even had ropes hung in my conservatory to help me learn!'*

Yvonne was certainly equipping herself with the tools she needed to embrace a new chapter in her life.



Activity 1

How to equip yourself and what with

In small groups discuss where you find yourself in life and if there are some some new challenges that you would like to pursue.

This might not be as extreme as horse riding, but some may want to give it a go! Perhaps it is voluntary work in a school, reading with children, taking up some form of exercise, doing some further study which can be done through a local college or even study through The Salvation Army (speak to your CO about the opportunities available).

If you are struggling to think about anything new that you might want to take on as a challenge, think about the activities you are already involved in. Let the group help you to find ways of enhancing what you are already doing or increasing your existing knowledge.

Remember, every new day is a day to explore learning and new understanding.

Quote 'Never be afraid to try new things, and make some mistakes, it's all part of life and learning'. (Anonymous)



Hebrews 13:20-21 is a prayer asking that the God of peace will 'equip you with everything good for doing his will and that he may work in us what is pleasing to Him.'

Have you considered before how important it is to equip yourself with the tools you need for a task God has called you to? Some of us may struggle to say that we need to learn something new to do a task better or to learn a new task. This can be because we perceive it as a failure if others see we need to learn something new. Take technology for instance. We cannot resist it; it is everywhere we go, yet so many of us want to resist it because it is not part of who we are. We may say, 'we never needed it before so why do we need it now?' Taking technology as an example, it opens our eyes to the world around us. At the touch of a button we can see and hear news from every part of this world in which we live. At the touch of a button we can connect with friends and family in Australia or anywhere and see photos of babies that have only just been born an hour ago. At the touch of a button we can learn new things, read articles and even books 'on-line'.

Learning a new skill can open up doors you never even knew were there. Perhaps you have been invited onto a leadership team at church but you are aware there is friction and this makes you want to stay away. How about taking a course on conflict management or reading a book to educate yourself and give yourself the tools you need to handle a new and challenging situation? There are many examples that I am sure you will be able to think of for yourself.

Activity 2 - In small groups discuss this quote:

'Change can be frightening, and the temptation is often to resist it. But change almost always provides opportunities – to learn new things, to rethink tired processes, and to improve the way we work.' Klaus Schwab (German engineer and economist)

Philippians 4:13 says 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' The God we worship and adore flung stars into space. He created a beautiful world which has sea creatures which are still unknown to us and planets that we will never reach. We worship an amazing God who gave us his son Jesus. If we believe this to be true then we can say with confidence 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'.



Equipping yourself with the tools for the task

Reflection & Commitment

Take one of the cards provided and write a letter to yourself as a commitment to how you will equip yourself with what you need at this moment in your life.

Be bold, be brave.

Who knows what doors will open, what friendships will be made, what souls will be saved because you pushed the door and equipped yourself?

You will change the world around you, one soul at a time. The soul may be a child in a classroom who has no grandparents to read with them. You can make a difference.

(Give time for people to write their cards of commitment)



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Session 3

Energise those around you

Activity 1

Circle of Influence

Take a piece of paper and draw a circle in the middle. Write your name in the circle. Then draw spokes coming from the circle in all directions. At the end of the spokes name people/groups of people who you spend time with. This is called our 'Circle of Influence'.

Share this with the people around you or share in a wider group discussion. Listen for familiars such as family/friends but also listen for ideas from others how you could widen your circle of influence even further.

Activity 2

Your Circles Circle!

Now draw spokes coming from your names/groups of influence to include 'their' groups of influence. For example if you have grandchildren they will have spokes of influence in their school/clubs/churches/friendships groups etc.



Teaching – Energising those around you

Let us think back to the very first scripture we looked at in Session 1. The Message version of Romans 12:1-2

‘Here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going to work and walking around life and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you and quickly respond to it.’

You have a massive influence upon the world in which you live. Family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, children in the street playing, cashiers at the supermarket, the list is endless.

Have you ever considered your role to ‘Energise those around you?’ You may want to laugh and think, ‘I have trouble energising myself’. The verb ‘energise’ means to give energy to or rouse into activity. The Holy Spirit in Hebrew language is ‘Ruach’. This gives meaning of a force like the wind which is invisible but can be felt and experienced. The Holy Spirit brings energy as the breath of God within us. Therefore, if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and we energise those around us we are breathing out into this world breath of God within us.

What a beautiful world we would live in if everyone accepted the breath of God for themselves. So take a moment to think about the school children you see kicking along stones as they walk home from school. You could energise them by smiling and saying hello even asking ‘how was your day?’ Do not be afraid of children, they are only smaller versions of you and I. Think about the lady at the fish counter in the supermarket. Ask her how she is, breathe out gentleness and kindness into what may have been a smelly day filled with outrageously unkind customers.

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.’ Galatians 5:22-23.



If we embrace who we are, equip ourselves with the tools for where we find ourselves and energise those around us with God's Holy Spirit helping us, we will change this world! Finding something new to be part of, perhaps widening your circles of influence will allow you to energise people with love, joy, peace, patience and other fruit of the Spirit. If people see who you are and how you embrace life you will definitely have an impact on them and through God's Holy Spirit this will be a good impact.

'Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you will shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.' (Philippians 2:14-16)

Growing older is a gift which if you have shared in this session has been given to you and there is no doubt that you will know people who have already journeyed to be with Jesus who did not get the opportunity to grow older.

So here's the final question. What would happen if you woke every morning accepting the age you are and embracing all that brings?

(Discuss in a larger group if people will share openly)

There is only one you in this world and God needs you to influence and energise those around you. If you do not do it, who will? Remember Esther 4:14: 'For such a time as this'. Do not live life wanting to turn back time as you will only ever live in the past and miss the beauty of the present moment. Look ahead and acknowledge that every day we learn something new, and whether that comes through difficult or joyful experiences, it makes us who we are and there is no-one else in this world like you, so do not waste a moment.

United Prayer

Lord God Almighty

Thank you for every new day you gift us. For the years your love has kept and guided us we give you thanks. For every skill and gift we possess we thank you and commit to use our gifts to praise your name and show others your love on this earth. For the wisdom you have given us, the lessons we have learned we give you thanks and as we move forward in life may we be thankful for who you have made us to be, and thankful for the age we are and the life we lead.

Lord, help us to age well as your Holy Spirit breathes in us and through us we pray.

Amen.



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Territorial Commander for the United Kingdom and Ireland: commissioner Anthony Cotterill



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