

Take Heart: A Biblical Vision for Growing Older From Cradle to Grave

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“Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
 all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from before your birth,
 carried from the womb;
even to your old age I am he,
 *and to gray hairs **I will carry you.***
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.”

– Isaiah 46:3-4 ESV

“When we are made a new creation, at whatever age, it is new in light of eternity.”
(Autumn Alcott Ridenour, *Sabbath Rest as Vocation: Aging Toward Death*)

Scripture:

2 Corinthians 3:18

Colossians 1:27

Mark 12:30

Hebrews 12:2

Luke 2:40-52

Ecclesiastes 7:8-9

Romans 8:29

Isaiah 50:7

Psalms 92:12-15

2 Corinthians 3–5

Hebrews 10:23

Philippians 3:20–4:1

The Great Handoff: *Becoming a full, flourishing human as outwardly we waste away is a lifelong faithwalk during which God by the Spirit conforms us into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another, inwardly renewing us day by day, and empowering us to humbly steward our body and our soul until he **carries** us away to Home.*

“We Will Feast in the House of Zion” by Sandra McCracken

We will feast in the house of Zion

We will sing with our hearts restored

He has done great things, we will say together

We will feast and weep no more!

Do one: Now, prayerfully pick one or two ways you on your aging journey want to imitate what you beheld in Christ and believe about Heaven. How about humility? Christ humbled himself “even to death on a cross.” Throughout our lives, the aging process provides many crosses. One such cross for me is pride revealed in hearing loss. Why is it that when I can’t hear someone, I blame them?! You, too? If so, practice humility by examining your own heart to determine what is underneath that blame—is it shame? Pride? If so, humbly ask Jesus to help you despise the shame, kill your pride, and, controlled by the love of Christ, kindly ask others to repeat themselves. Be of good courage and share with others the hope you have in hearing loss.

Let's talk about kids. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructs the people to instruct their children: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be **on your heart**. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

FOR THIS PART OF MY TALK, I reached out to Julie Lowe, my sweet mentoring friend, and an expert in biblically counseling children and adolescents. You will find a link on my handout that will take you to a couple of free resources Julie has graciously agreed to share with you! She and I brainstormed together, and this is a mash-up of the two of us.

Consider that children get discouraged with their own weaknesses, shame, sinfulness, failures, and inability.

Keep in mind that children are people made in the image of God and are our neighbors (hat tip to Jen Wilkin for pointing that out to me years ago in her wonderful post “Our Children, Our Neighbors.”) **Remember** that children have a far more limited vocabulary than adults, and it is through words that we process and make meaning of the things that we see, feel, and/or witness.

Consider also that nowhere in the Bible does it say, “Now this is for the adults . . .” Maturity is addressed. Children are granted protections. Yet, it is clear that the whole Bible is for children to come to and mature in faith. This includes giving them a vision for aging. In particular, this subject is perfect to bring into gospel conversations with your children.

Here are a few things to think about as you have these conversations. Before you begin your conversation, do some research on the number of vocabulary words they have and how many they understand.

Ages 2–7 As you talk about their bodies with them, begin to create the category of embodied soul. Help them, with simple words, understand that their bodies need to be protected and stewarded, but not worshiped. Converse about the heart, and what it is and how it functions. Begin to plant seeds by sharing scripture such as worshipping God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Make sure *to begin* to explain identity in Christ, and root that in the reality that it is worked out through growing older.

Ages 8–11 Continue the conversation, using a wider range of words in keeping with their vocabulary. Read and discuss *Heaven for Kids* by Randy Alcorn with them. Kids are very visual and imaginative, so speak descriptively—and remember, you can’t give them what you don’t have. Remember, we don’t want to present Heaven as a place that takes away the real and present pain and suffering in this life. We invite children to express their suffering, fears, etc., and to comfort them in the midst of those experiences with a real picture of Consummation: In Heaven, forever, with Jesus, no more pain, no more sorrows, no more death, all shall be made right.

Ages 12–14 Continuing the conversation, partnering with your church to envision kids with more specific language about stewarding their bodies and souls, spending their lives for the Lord, and to what end. At this age, outward appearance is an external and an internal pressure. What does it mean to be an embodied, engendered, soul? To be a man, to be a woman? Where is their identity? Without Christ in their hearts, they are without the Spirit, and without a model. We share the gospel and its benefits so they see the goodness of loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Ages 15–18 Help them ask the question: How is eternity better than the temporal? We often talk of new heaven, new earth, new bodies, new hearts in theoretical terms, but the world around them is very tangible, and remember: young people believe they are invincible and immortal. What do they want for themselves, and how are they deciding? We must tell them the truth: Everything you love in this world you will lose, and in Heaven, it will all be redeemed. Our bodies and souls, perfected because of Jesus’ love for them.

Resources:

Julie Lowe:

- Body Image
 - *[Free sample](#), courtesy of Julie Lowe:
 - *[Full packet](#) and many more resources available for purchase at her website.
- Spiritual Death Cleaning: Making Room for What Lasts
<https://julielowe.org/f/spiritual-death-cleaning-making-room-for-what-lasts>

Jen Wilkin:

- Our Children, Our Neighbors
<https://www.jenwilkin.net/blog/2014/03/our-children-our-neighbors.html>

John Piper:

- I Act the Miracle
<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-act-the-miracle>

Darby Strickland books:

- [Becoming You for Boys](#)
- [Becoming You for Girls](#)