



LOOKING AT LIFE

Growing Old?

Hopeful Days Are Ahead!





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WHEN HIS EYESIGHT BEGAN TO FAIL, Chin Heng lost the will to live.

Up till then, he had been in near-perfect health. At 84, he had been able to get around on his own and care for himself. But now, he had to rely on neighbours just to get his meals. He sorely missed his wife, who had died a few years ago. He also wasn't close to his son and daughter, who lived far away and could not visit often. For the first time in his life, Chin Heng contemplated suicide.

Yuli felt like she could never truly retire. She and her husband were already in their 70s, but they were still working because their only daughter was mentally challenged and could not hold down a

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proper job.

Both she and her husband already suffered from the “usual” old-age problems like

diabetes and high blood pressure. How long more, Yuli wondered, could they go on like this? Who would take care of their daughter after they were gone?

Ruth was resigned to dying alone. Her husband had passed away a long time ago, and they

had no children. She had tried to stay active after retirement, meeting friends and taking part in community activities. But now, she could no longer find the strength to go out every day. And her friends were dying off, one by one. She had less and less to look forward to each day. “It’s sad to be old,” she would tell her remaining friends.

Do you feel the same way about ageing? Are you struggling with chronic disease or loneliness? Do you feel like there is little left to live for?

Growing old, unfortunately, is something all of us will have to go through. A Chinese proverb expresses this painful truth most simply: “Men grow old and pearls grow yellow; there is no cure for it.”

Going Downhill

ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS

to accept about growing old is the degeneration of physical health. No matter how tough or healthy you are, you're likely to find your eyesight and hearing failing, and your strength and stamina not quite what they used to be. The threat of illness is a source of concern, too. There's chronic ailments such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol to worry about, or even worse—cancer, heart attack, or stroke. You may even have had close friends suffering or dying from these diseases, and it's hard not to wonder: Is growing old all about suffering?

Perhaps what hurts as much as physical degeneration is the loss of independence. Weakness and illness could mean having to rely on others even for the smallest daily tasks, like going to the bathroom, putting on clothes, or having a meal.

This can be embarrassing or even humiliating,

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because it is a reminder that we are no longer the strong, capable, independent men or women we used to be.

Like some of your peers, you may also feel that you are becoming irrelevant, left behind by rapid social and technological changes in a world that just

doesn't seem to value age and experience any more. You might feel like you're no longer useful or needed by society, which can lead to the depressing feeling that there's no more purpose in life and little left to live for. In such times, it's hard not to ask:

Am I becoming useless? Or perhaps you are struggling with loneliness, having lost a spouse or drifted from your children.

You may feel like a stranger in your own home, or feel abandoned by your own family.

And you start to wonder: Does anyone still love me?

Do you ever ask such questions? And have you ever wondered if there was someone who could provide an answer? Someone who

would truly understand how you feel, who could help you through your suffering, reassure you in times of doubt, and give you a reason to keep living?

Many in your situation have tried to seek their own solutions, but discovered that nothing in this world can really solve the problems of ageing. No doctor or medicine can stop your body from degenerating. No family or friend can meet your deepest needs perfectly. And no activity or hobby can truly fill the growing emptiness that many of us feel.

Someone Who Can Help

BUT WHAT IF there is someone who can answer your questions? What if there is someone who not

only understands how you feel, but can also help you through the journey of ageing? And what if this someone is waiting, with open arms, for you to turn to him?

Perhaps you could consider this someone—the creator God.

This God, who is called Jesus, created each and every one of us. He made us in his likeness, so he understands exactly how we think and feel. He designed and made every part of us, so he knows what is happening to us: physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. He knows our discomfort and pain, our worry and fear, and our loneliness and emptiness.

Even more importantly, Jesus loves every one of us. No matter

how old we are, each and every one of us is precious to him. If we trust in him and follow him as our God, this is what he offers:

1.A Reassuring Presence

No child can avoid the typical challenges of growing up, like going to school and making new friends, or the inevitable heartaches of life: the physical, mental, and emotional changes, the painful falls and devastating failures, and the crushing disappointments. But his parents can help him through the journey.

They can walk alongside, comforting and reassuring him with the knowledge that he can draw upon their help and advice whenever he needs it. He can face any challenge with confidence,

knowing that they will always be there for him.

Imagine enjoying God's presence in the same way! That is exactly what he promises—to be with you every step of the way as you journey through old age. He offers you his guidance, wisdom, and understanding to deal with your problems, as well as his comfort and companionship. You will be able to turn to him anytime, and he will always be there—like a loving parent—to listen, to encourage, to comfort, and to help.

In the Bible, God promises us: “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” (Isaiah 46:4).

2. Identity and Value

Have you seen a parent doting on a child? Every child is dear to his parent simply because he is the latter's offspring. That's what you're like to God—you are absolutely precious to Him simply because He created you. He doesn't look at us the way the world does; He sees beyond our age, abilities, and achievements, and loves us for who we are.

This is because when we believe in him, he adopts us as his own children. Our new identity is not based on what we do, what we have achieved, or how good or useful we are. Rather, it is completely based on God's grace and love. He wants to give us the right to be his children. And like a

parent who treasures every child, God values each and every one of us. This privilege of being God's children is something that we will never lose.

The Bible says: "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:4–5).

3.A Meaningful Existence

You've probably seen how the birth of a grandchild provides a huge dose of joy and meaning to an elderly person, giving them a new lease on life. It's

the same way when you believe in and follow God—your new relationship with him will bring great purpose and passion to your life, as you grow in your interaction with Jesus. Life will take on a new meaning!

You may also find new opportunities to employ your wisdom and experience as you join a community of others who also follow Jesus. The Bible contains many examples of how God greatly values older people. They enjoy an honoured status in society, and younger people are told to respect them and to treasure their advice and wisdom. Some were even chosen by God to carry out important tasks in their later years—at the age of 80 or

more. Jesus has a special place in his heart for older people.

The Bible tells of a man who felt so blessed by God that he couldn't stop telling others about him. Even though he was old, he saw a purpose in life, and prayed to God, asking:

“Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the
next generation, your mighty
acts to all who are to come”
(Psalm 71:17-18, NIV).

If we follow God, we will become like this man, able to find a new goal and purpose in life while knowing that God would never abandon him.

4. The Hope of Eternal Life

Have you wondered—perhaps even worried—about what happens after death? Is death an absolute end? Is there an after-life?

These may seem like difficult questions, but Jesus has the answers! He offers something amazing: the hope of eternal life. This may be hard to understand right now, but if we trust in the creator God, the ultimate giver of life, it is exactly what he promises. After we pass on from this world, he will take us to be with him forever, freed from all human frailties.

Jesus says, “Those who listen to my message and believe in God

who sent me have eternal life”
(John 5:24).

With such a hope, life—and the challenges of growing old—will start to look very different. Even though you will still have to deal

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with physical and mental degeneration, you will have something wonderful to look forward to—like a really good prize at the end of a long, hard race.

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Do Consider Jesus!

GROWING OLD CAN BE CHALLENGING.

We will continue to struggle with our physical and mental limitations, as well as our feelings of insecurity, sadness, abandonment, and loneliness. But you can find new meaning and hope in Jesus. If you believe and trust in him, you will find that you no longer need to walk this challenging journey alone—Jesus will be with you every step of the way; not just in this life, but in the life to come.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, what he offers, and how you can find him?

If you want to find out more about God, one way is to make contact with a local church, where

someone can help answer any questions you might have. Another way is to get hold of a Bible, which will tell you about Jesus.

You can also visit us online at **www.oddb.org** and browse our extensive selection of printed and digital resources.



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