

Too old to be useful?

By John Halford

When, 17 years ago, my eldest daughter announced that she was pregnant, everyone in the family was delighted. Except me. She was married, of ideal childbearing age, in good health and in every way ready to be a mother. I was just not ready to be a grandfather.

I associated being a grandfather as something that happened to old men. You are called “grandpa,” or “pappy,” and I wasn’t prepared for that. I was wrong, of course. I realize now that far from being a sign of premature aging, being a grandparent is a rejuvenating and intensely rewarding experience.



“There is no such thing as a useless or obsolete part of the body of Christ.”

My grandchildren—we now have six—have changed my life. In particular they have changed the way I look at the future. They remind me that long after I have gone on to whatever happens next, they will be here, living, loving and I hope, trying to make a positive difference in the world.

That gives me a stake in the future.

A selfish generation

As we get older, it is tempting to allow our horizons to shrink. Health concerns, fixed incomes and the other problems of later life replace the priorities of younger days. The Baby Boomers, the largest and arguably the most selfish generation ever, are beginning to retire now. They have always been a demanding lot, and at least in the developed world have built a society based around satisfying not only their needs, but also their whims.

They are living longer, too. Probably for the first time ever, we have four active, valid generations living at the same time. It is not at all unusual to be a great-grandfather, and even a great-great-grandfather now. When Social Security

programs were created in the mid-1930s, it was considered reasonable that after 50 or so years of working life, a man or woman was entitled to four or five years of relative ease. Then they would do the decent thing and depart the scene. The social welfare systems were not designed for us to go on living 15, 20 and more years after retirement. In their declining years, the Baby Boomers still have the ability to suck the potential out of the future.

However, the Bible perspective is that an older generation leaves something for the younger.

“Children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children,” wrote Paul (2 Corinthians 12:14). This may seem more

idealistic than practical in a world of escalating health care, reverse mortgages and pension schemes facing bankruptcy. But there are other ways to “lay up”

for the future of your family.

It is with this in mind that the Worldwide Church of God, which sponsors this magazine, has launched a new initiative—*WCG Next*. Through various programs and activities we hope we can help develop the potential of *all* of our members—whoever they are and wherever they are—to work together to fulfill the church’s goal of living and sharing the good news that is the gospel. For a church to have four valid and active generations can be a liability. Or it can be a resource. We choose to see it as a resource.

Let those with age and experience encourage those who have youth, idealism and energy. Let those reaching the final chapters of their lives keep looking outward, and through mentoring and prayers help those coming behind build a foundation for their life of service. There is no such thing as a useless or obsolete part of the body of Christ. As Paul reminded the Christians at Ephesus nearly 2,000 years ago: “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16). ●