What Really Matters?

Revelation 2:10 HCSB  Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will have tribulation for 10 days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Introduction:
I’d like to speak for a moment to those of you who have been seasoned with time. Of course, some of us are more salty than others!

You may feel that your contribution has been made and that it is now time to rest on your laurels. You may feel that your sole purpose in the family is to spoil the grandchildren and then go off on vacation, leaving your children with the aftermath! Nothing could be further from the truth.

We must take seriously Revelation 2:10, be faithful unto death. If we believe faithfulness is important throughout life, then ministry must be structured to value faithfulness in all people regardless of age.

What Really Matters? It’s a matter of six things.
1. It's a matter of sharing (Job 12:12; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)
The church is a passenger ship transporting Christians through this world to be with God for eternity. On a ship, certain people are at the front viewing where they are going. Others are at the rear viewing where they have been. Young people usually gravitate to the front and older people to the rear. Older people have precious memories to cherish and priceless wisdom to share.

• Job 12:12 HCSB  Wisdom is found with the elderly, and understanding comes with long life.

The church and the family must value this perspective. The question is not whether vision for the future or wisdom from the past is most important. Both are! Of greater importance is the number of people boarding the boat and being saved. Noah and his family worked as a team, lived harmoniously on the ark, and were saved. God wants His church family to follow that example today.
In salvation both are needed. In Ecclesiastes Solomon looked back on his life and the futility of a lot of his pursuits and he came to this conclusion.

• Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 HCSB When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

Look to the future. Repent and come to Christ and your future will be bright.

We need each other. The young have abundant energy and want to do but they can be stupid. Those seasoned with time have limited energy and want to slow down but they are full of wisdom and experiences.

2. It’s a matter of reassignment
Retirement can be detrimental to spiritual health! Some retirees grab their pensions and drift away from the Father into the far country indulging in what they believe they deserve and have earned. How foolish and sinful to squander resources God could use!

We need to teach that retirement from Christian service is not an option. Those seasoned with time do not have more time but they have more control over their time.
Think about what older Christian can do with their time. More time to pray. More time to get involved in community activities. Time to spend with youth (after all they go home). Time to spend doing what they enjoy in Christian service.

Study done and examined the lives of 400 outstanding achievers, those who accomplished a lot. It was found that persons between the ages of 60 and 70 produced 35% of the world’s great achievements. 23% were produced by persons between 70 and 80. The most outstanding finding of this study was that 64% of the great achievements were made by persons who had passed their 60th birthday.

They have been released from an oppressive work schedule. There is no longer a ringing alarm, no hectic rush to punch the time clock, and no imposed regimen of activity. You can achieve more for Christ in your future than you ever have in the past. There are still many things for you to do.

The church should enlist older adults in a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. It’s a time for reassignment, not retirement!

3. It’s a matter of serving (Titus 2:1-6)

Jesus settled an argument among His disciples by equating greatness with service. His mission was not to be served but to serve. Great churches avoid self-serving programs and maximize potential for service. Great families are formed when the members understand that greatness lies in service; to each other and to other families.

Some leaders assume older adults are people to be served and categorize them as caretaking liabilities who drain ministerial time and resources. Leadership decisions often communicate older church members are not needed.

The consensus is: “Not much return for the effort! They have been this way and they will not change. Evangelism is difficult among this group. Those who have gone to church for years and have never gotten involved will always be this way.”

Maybe they never had an opportunity to get involved. If we push them away, we are throwing away God’s treasures. Healthy churches and great families value the growth potential and productivity of older adults.

Learning can and should continue. Many times seasoned with time saints are shepherds to the younger generation. We need to feed the shepherds. If we don’t feed the shepherds, the lambs will go away.

- Titus 2:1-6 HCSB  But you must speak what is consistent with sound teaching. 2 Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. 3 In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not addicted to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be sensible, pure, good homemakers, and submissive to their husbands, so that God’s message will not be slandered. 6 Likewise, encourage the young men to be sensible.

We must not neglect the frail elderly but we must also not coddle older adults with token ministry. Let’s not be like the churches that just let them play bingo and have fellowships and that is all. No encouragement to serve. No stimulus to get involved. This church will not be a babysitting service for the elderly as long as I am your pastor. It is the same with the youth. We need to teach and challenge them to be the best they can be for Christ. A person’s greatest need is to be needed.

4. It’s a matter of attitude (Joshua 14:10-12)

The desire of wise older people is to press on. They do not want to rust out they want to wear out. Listen to Caleb in Joshua 14 – “Here I am today, 85 years old! I am still strong now give me the hill country where all the giants are.” Caleb did not view himself as too old for productive service. Also, Joshua and the others valued his service.
We err in today’s church and in society when we establish chronological age distinctions determining one’s capability or effectiveness. How much better to avoid the stereotypes and nurture positive attitudes about aging!

5. It’s a matter of embracing change (2 Cor. 4:18)

Change is at the core of Christianity. Not that God changes, he is the same. But we must change. Acceptance of Christ means a change of heart. This world is not our home; we are just a passing through. I want it to be the same in the church and in my life. Let me say we are all going to experience a big change as long as the Lord tarries. We are going to die. Do we not want to leave this place?

- 2 Corinthians 4:18 HCSB 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

We like things the same. We desire comforts and securities. However, if we keep our focus on what is important, the eternal things, we realize that many of our hang-ups are so temporary. This world is going to change whether we do or not.

Conflict over change occurs when too much emphasis is place upon the here and now. When churches prioritize the unchanging truths of God, heated debates are cooled, and Christ’s mission is accomplished.

A church had a change in music. An elderly man was asked if he like the music. “No, I don’t. But when I see all of the young people and when I see my own grandchildren praising the Lord, this is what really matters and then the music doesn’t mean that much to me.”

6. It’s a matter of the future (Ps. 145:4-5)

An 80 year old Christian man gazed at the church building under construction and remarked, “I may not live long enough to worship in that building but I support this project with all my heart. I know long after I’m gone, many people will come to know Christ here. I’m grateful to God I’m able to help a little while I can.”

- Psalms 145:4-5 HCSB One generation will declare Your works to the next and will proclaim Your mighty acts. 5 I will speak of Your glorious splendor and Your wonderful works.

Are we effectively passing the baton of faith to the next generation? The answer to that question is what really matters.

Conclusion: (Judges 2:7, 10)

How to promote the youth ministry to the senior’s ministry? Simple. The seniors are soon going to be leaving and what are we going to leave behind? What will our legacy be? We need your children and grandchildren – we need the next generation giving their allegiance to Christ.

We are soon going to be gone and who is going to take our place? This was a big problem with Israel.

- Judges 2:7, 10 HCSB The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua’s lifetime and during the lifetimes of the elders who outlived Joshua. They had seen all the LORD’s great works He had done for Israel. 10 That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works He had done for Israel.

This cycle, whose fault was it? The younger generations? Oh yes. They bear responsibility for their choices. But the older generation probably had a part to play as well. Seasoned Saint! What is your legacy? What direction will your children and grandchildren take?