

## Ministering to the aged

It will be too late then to try to remember him when the sun and light and moon and stars are dim to your old eyes, and there is no silver lining left among your clouds. For there will come a time when your limbs will tremble with age, your strong legs will become weak, and your teeth will be too few to do their work, and there will be blindness too. Then let your lips be tightly closed while eating when your teeth are gone! And you will waken at dawn with the first note of the birds; but you yourself will be deaf and tuneless, with quavering voice. You will be afraid of heights and of falling—a white-haired, withered old man, dragging himself along: without sexual desire, standing at death's door, and nearing his everlasting home as the mourners go along the streets. Eccl. 12:2-5 TLB. This is the description of the time when one can be said to have advanced in years. And the Lord commands that this category of people should be honoured (Exod. 20:12), and shown due respect.

You shall stand up before the grey head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:32).

A man's life is normally divided into five stages namely: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. In each of these stages an individual finds himself in different situations and faces different problems. Old age is viewed as an unavoidable, undesirable and problem ridden phase of life. Problems of aging usually appear after the age of 65 years (Shuani). The World Health Organisation believes that most developed world countries characterise old age starting at **60 years and above**. However, this definition isn't adaptable to a place like Africa, where the more traditional definition of an elder, or elderly person, starts between 50 to 65 years of age (Aged Care Guide). Five most prevalent old age problems include: Physiological, psychological, Social, Emotional and Financial problems.

Old age is a blessing. The preacher, Solomon said, "The glory of young men is their [physical] strength, And *the honor of aged men is their gray head* [representing wisdom and experience]. Prov. 20:29 AMP. A lot of teenagers and young folks do not pay attention to the beauty of one's old age and how to help the aged redeem it. You are a young Christian teenager, make up your mind to honour those who are aged, living close to or far from you in relation. Anyone who can have you as child or grandchild ought to be ministered to. The bible admonishes us to honour our parents, so that we might grow to also fulfill our own days. Every aged person deserves the honour of being ministered unto (Prov. 3:27; Rom. 13:7).

In Africa, many young people are made to believe that grandparents, or aged women are witches, and this has in some ways made some teenagers to close their minds against grannies who should enjoy the company of their young friends. It should not be so for you because, **you see all men as Jesus sees them**. You relate with the aged according to the word of God, in obedience to it.

How do we minister to them? As earlier stated, your aged neighbour(s) have five major problems or needs. Identify yourself with them and their problems (Pro. 19:27). You might have been equipped with enough capacity to respond to one or some. Ranging from their *physiological, psychological, social, emotional and financial needs*. Under these classifications exists all their major needs that requires someone who cares and obeys God to administer it to them.

Provide them with clothing, become an encouragement and a source of liveliness to them, hug them, kiss them (at least a peck on the cheek, forehead or back of the hand) will bring them a sense of being loved and accepted among people, it reminds them that they are not seen as a burden. Put a smile on their faces by cracking jokes with them, eat with them, and if possible ask them to share an old story with you anytime you are with them; help them buy provisions from the neighborhood tuck shop or a supermarket; get them new shoes if you have the means; go visiting, help them clean the house, wash the plates, laundry their clothes, get them body cares (like pomade, spray, cutting their overgrown fingernails etc.) – if they don't mind; help them cut the grasses growing around their houses; engage them in discussions to help curb any excess feeling of loneliness; just put a genuine smile on their faces, as often as you can. Pray for them/with them as often as you can; give them money when you have; whenever service holds or worshippers gather for fellowship, help them get to the nearest local church in the vicinity in order to keep warmth with the other brethren. Avoid offending them; make them feel how much their being alive means to you. When possible go to them on vacations, and ask them to teach you, you may even pay them visits with your friend, and don't forget to communicate with them using the language they understand the most, if you don't know how to speak that much, then talk less, and act more. Perhaps, in the cause of their recommendations and compliments, you'll still learn one or two new vocabularies; you can ask them to teach you more, this usually makes living with them full of fun and life.