



September 29, 2025

I'm settled in a comfy chair next to our fireplace contemplating the lapping flames and enjoying the warmth they send my way. The late hour and quiet surroundings have encouraged a reflective mood. It was a busy summer with a steady flow of company, outdoor barbeques, and late evening sunsets. Snow birds will be leaving soon for sunnier places, so many of the boats, docks, and beach gear have already disappeared from the lake shores. One by one, nearby family cottages and rentals are becoming shuttered.

It looks different around our place, too. The lawn doesn't have to be mowed as often, and the kayaks and bicycles are stowed until they're needed again next summer. The chairs are still on the porches, but warmer clothes are needed now when sipping our morning coffee there. I really don't mind that another year is easing toward its conclusion. There's beauty in the different seasons, each has it's own characteristics, but this one is my favorite. Very soon, the trees and hillsides will be dressed in the stunning colors of autumn everywhere we look. All of these are daily reminders that things simply don't stay the same.

Change is inevitable. Life moves forward, like it or not. Not that all change is unwanted, of course, it can also be healing and uplifting, but with each passing year, the effects are more obvious. Viewing old photographs or looking in the mirror confirms it. The grandchildren don't fit on my lap anymore, and it takes longer to climb a stair with a gimpy knee. Much of this advancing condition is reasonably predictable; expanded waistlines, wrinkles, and the inconvenient matter of forgetfulness. Thankfully, most people who love us put up with it.

My meandering thoughts tonight have led to the personal journey of aging. Granted, growing older isn't an engaging topic, so I'll try to make it tolerable. Proverbs 16: 31 calls gray hair "a crown of splendor." Since it

appears to be a universal process, the thing to consider is how well one makes the necessary adjustments. Personalities and expectations are different; hence, people respond in different ways. Not everyone is comfortable or accepting of the later life changes in their many forms. They may even resent or deny it. Current cosmetic procedures, along with an endless supply of beauty products, help with that.

Since being far down the road with this journey, I've found that one's quality of life and emotional well-being at the various ages has more to do with attitude than actual numbers. Everyone experiences ups and downs along the way, so it's good news that others ahead of us can serve as role-models who provide worthy examples to follow. They matter because, as one of my students pointed out years ago, they are the ones who leave their footprints on our hearts. It has taken some time, but the influence others have had on guiding and shaping my understanding of this is clearer now,

God has chosen some wonderful mentors for me. I'll save the story of my beloved grandmother for another time, but would like to share a little about my two sisters who were entering their teens when I was born (yes, I was a surprise). They were exactly a year apart, with birthdays in February; one on Lincoln's birthday, the other on Washington's. They always had their special day off from school. I didn't. They also married brothers, but there wasn't another left for me when I grew up. In spite of the age differences, we're all very close and an important part of each other's lives. Through the years we have laughed, listened, counseled, cried, and prayed together, but mostly we still have fun. Every year we spend a "sister's weekend" (with spouses) to celebrate our birthdays together. Mine is one week after theirs.

Now my sisters are 88 and 89 years old, and I'm blessed and grateful beyond measure to still have them. They are as different as sisters can be, but each is a woman of deep faith; wise, loving, and generous of spirit. Individually, they continue to lead interesting active lives that uplift others. They're still leaving their footprints on hearts. It's been a privilege to learn from them as they moved forward from young adults, to wives, mothers, grandparents, and great-grandparents who have represented meaningful aging at each stage. So, what's the point of my musing by the fire this evening? Perhaps it's summed up in the word *legacy*. Each of us will leave one, but what will it be and for whom?

Most of us won't be famous or remembered for our contribution to the world, but the reservoir of wisdom, experience, and general knowledge older people have acquired shouldn't be hidden away. Yes, it requires effort and being open to opportunity because it has purpose. It makes a difference in the lives of those we love and who love us in return. Every close relationship, whether brief or long-term, adds a chapter to life's stories in a way no other relationship can. I also believe that it fulfills God's intent that we stay vital and relevant at any age. Psalms 92:13 - 14 is a gentle insight. When planted in Him "*...they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green ...*".

We're encouraged to remain busy at His work as long as possible. So, the

question remains. Where are we leaving our footprints? Children? Grandchildren? Neighbors? Co-workers? The energy needed to do the task is promised. *"Even to our old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will carry you."* Isaiah 46:4. It's God's strength, not our own, that helps us take up the challenge to invest time and His truth in the lives of others. The reward for both can be enormous and lasting, too.

~Written by Char Kamper

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