

ADDRESSING THE AGING DILEMMA By Jim Langley

For business and professional leaders in many nations, the issue of aging employees has become an important matter for discussion. In some countries, such as the United States, people in the workplace are getting older on average. Some companies have age limits established for mandatory retirement, but should people's right to extend their careers be limited by an arbitrary number?

My experience has taught me that a person's age is not always a fair way of assessing someone's worth in the workplace. What we all need to consider is each individual person's capacity for properly serving in their specific role competently. Being a veteran of the insurance industry, for example, I know my profession requires mental acuity and some physical stamina.

I have reached the point in my 40-year insurance career where I am receptive to 'passing the baton' to a younger competent person. However, I also know God has blessed me with longevity and a sound mind. In fact, I believe some of my most productive years might still lay ahead of me. This present journey has been exhilarating, and I look forward to where God is leading me in the future. If you are retired from your profession, I hope you have found productive uses for your time. But I am not ready for a life of leisure.

As a follower of Jesus Christ and a consistent reader of God's Word, the Bible, I have been impressed by the long lives of two men who remained devoted to God during the ancient Israelites' 40-year journey in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb, representing the tribes of Ephraim and Judah, along with 10 others were sent to spy out the Promised Land, as recounted in Numbers 13. They alone returned from the covert mission with a positive "minority report," giving a glowing account to Moses and the Israelites about what they saw during their covert mission.

Joshua and Caleb also were the two men God called to lead the Israelite remnant into Canaan and claim the land for His chosen people. The other spies were prohibited from entering it. "Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — except [Caleb and Joshua] for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly" (Numbers 32:11-12).

Joshua and Caleb were both in their 80's when they crossed the Jordan River, and both lived well past the age of 100! During those years, Israel conquered most of the land God had promised to them and the people flourished. These men were effective leaders who certainly loved the Lord, leading the Israelites to many victories and a few setbacks as the Israelites faithfully followed their example.

Both men were led by God's Spirit as they demonstrated spiritual, mental, and physical strength that enabled them to lead the wayward flock of Israelites. This same spiritual, mental, and physical strength is available today to each of us who place our trust in the Lord, regardless of

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whether we are young and just getting started in our careers, midway through them, or nearing the conclusion of our working lives.

If the Lord gives you longevity and blesses you with the necessary spiritual, mental and physical strength, He is expecting you to remain faithful and obedient in whatever circumstances you find yourself in.

God has a wonderful plan for those who remain obedient to the end.

© 2024, all rights reserved. Jim Langley has been writing for more than 30 years while working as a life and health insurance agent. In recent years, his passion has turned to writing about his relationship with God. His goal is to encourage others to draw near to Him as well. A long-time member of CBMC, he started writing "Fourth Quarter Strategies" in 2014.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. If someone were to ask you, "When is a person too old to continue working?", how would you respond?
2. Does your company or organization have a mandatory or even suggested retirement age? Do you think there are some professions where age limits should be established because of their unique demands? If so, which would you say they are – and why?
3. What might be some of the benefits of allowing people to continue in their current roles if they possess the physical, mental, and spiritual strength needed to fulfill their responsibilities?
4. In societies where a significant proportion of the workforce is getting older, what might be some of the "downsides" of people retiring too early, whether by their own choice or by corporate decisions? Can you think of anyone in your organization who might serve in a Joshua or Caleb type of role?

Challenge for This Week

Two of the greatest and yet often untapped resources in the workplace today are wisdom and experience. These are qualities that older workers typically have in abundance. If you are one of those older workers, you should be intentionally and actively seeking out ways to share what you have learned with others. If you are a younger worker, you might benefit greatly from spending time with a more experienced colleague. This week, think of ways you can either start sharing your experience and wisdom, or find that person who can teach and show you what they have learned.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages: Numbers 8:26; Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 4:9-12; Acts 11:30; 1 Timothy 3:1-10, 5:17

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