

What You Can Do to Delay Getting Old

It may sound like an odd comment, but while talking with my son-in-law Ryan recently, I said to him, “Do whatever you can not to get old.”

Ryan turns 50 in October and I turned 68 in March, so I understand that neither of us are kids anymore. And of course, I recognize that we get older every day, and so, a long life means an old life.

I also realize that there are many virtues that can be found in old age.

There is accumulated wisdom. There is a lifetime of experiences. There is the joy of seeing multiple generations of children (both physical children and spiritual children).

That’s why the Bible says that, “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is attained by the way of righteousness” (Prov. 16:31).

And as much as we often say that it is a young person’s world today, in biblical culture, the aged were to be revered: “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD” (Levi. 19:32).

I even wrote recently that one of the unexpected joys of growing older is that you get to see more prayers answered, some of which you have prayed for decades. The more years you live, the more you get to see God’s faithfulness!

At the same time, we often grow old prematurely, by which I mean become decrepit and weak, quite unnecessarily. We don’t take proper care of our bodies, either by overwork or neglect. And for the most part, especially here in America, we do not

give our bodies the proper fuel they need to run at optimum levels, thereby hastening the aging process.

It does not have to be that way. I can testify firsthand.

Without any exaggeration, I can honestly say that I am far more fit, far more vibrant, far more energetic today, at the age of 68, than I was at the age of 59. Far more.

Nine years ago, I weighed as much as 275 pounds. I had high blood pressure. I had several headaches a week. I had constant lower back pain. I often felt groggy during the day. Yet I worked out regularly and was not a glutton.

On the other hand, I was a lifelong, unhealthy eater. And I mean lifelong.

I was a chocaholic and, if there is such a thing, a pizzaholic.

I *had* to eat chocolate every day, normally several times a day. I *craved* unhealthy foods. And even though I never ate whatever I wanted to all day and night, I was addicted to unhealthy foods. That is a plain fact.

Ironically, I was extremely self-controlled in virtually every other area of life, keeping a very intense schedule and having to make sacrificial choices for the sake of ministry on a regular basis.

But the food addictions prevailed, despite my moderation. (By “moderation,” I mean this. If I was going to have a chocolate Extreme Blizzard at Dairy Queen—alone about 1,500 calories—I would skip lunch or dinner to make up for that. The same with a Five Guys burger with a mountain of fries. That would take the place of two meals.)

I did try to avoid fried foods most of the time. And I limited my intake of red meat (a little). But, to say it once more, I flooded my body with unhealthy foods, as a result of which I

was both cutting my life short and reducing the quality of my life.

By God's grace, and in answer to the prayers of my wife Nancy, my own prayers, and the prayers of others, I was able to make a radical lifestyle change starting Aug. 2014.

No dairy. No sugar. No flour.

A little grilled meat (normally chicken) about once a week.

No salt, and in general, very low sodium.

A massive daily intake of raw, unprocessed, plant-based foods, along with lots of fruits and some organic, raw nuts and seeds.

As I've shared before, in less than 8 months, I went from 275 pounds to 180 pounds, weighing about 182 today. And by God's grace (I mean that from the heart; He graciously intervened in my life), this is how I live, without exception.

As a result, I feel as if I'm getting younger every year (despite my very gray, thinning hair). And, to repeat, while I'm not boasting about tomorrow, I feel as if I'm just getting started, functioning with the zeal and passion of a man in his 20s or 30s.

After my recent blood tests, which required 13 vials of blood and yielded almost 30 pages of data, my doctor told me that I'm in the top % of men my age. I am thankful to the Lord beyond words!

Eating like this (Nancy and I wholeheartedly follow the recommendations of Dr. Joel Fuhrman; see his book "The End of Dieting"), you can reverse heart disease as well as many other conditions (including Type 2 diabetes).

Generally speaking, I take no medications, and for almost a decade now, my blood pressure has been excellent. In fact,

after my last visit to a vascular surgeon (to check on a condition that arose prior to my lifestyle change), he exclaimed, "Your circulation is really strong and your blood pressure is perfect."

Is it challenging to make such a radical lifestyle change? Absolutely. Is it easy? Absolutely not.

But with God's help, once you break free from the addictions and retrain your body and your mind, it's a delight, a joy, a celebration. And as someone who travels around the world and is constantly in hotels and at restaurants, I can assure you that, with proper planning and a commitment not to fall off the wagon, you can do this.

For the sake of your families, your co-workers, your own enjoyment of life and the stewardship of your bodies before the Lord who owns you, I urge you: Do whatever you can not to get old.

(Ironically, seconds after finishing this article while flying from Atlanta to Tel Aviv, I was explaining to a flight attendant why I was eating a banana rather than another onboard snack. He confessed to me immediately that he needed to lose 40 pounds but struggled because of the American diet. I assured him that I understood, especially with all the travel too, but then encouraged him to take the radical plunge. He replied to me, "You're an inspiration!") {eoa}

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