

Interests & Needs Of Mature, Seasoned Couples

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*"Teach me O Lord to number my days,
Teach me to number my days,
And satisfy early my deep yearning heart
That I may rejoice, always.*

*Three score years and ten,
Are all our lives may hold,
Fleeting years we spend,
A tale so quickly told,*

*And Judgment greets us then,
Our Maker we behold,
Teach me O Lord to number my days,
O teach me to number my days."*



Interests and Needs of Mature, Seasoned Couples

Some Areas to Consider:

1. Time for Spiritual Growth
2. Health and Physical Challenges
3. Appropriate Family Boundaries
4. The "Empty Nest" and Grand-Parenting
5. Understanding and Meeting Intimacy Needs
6. Retirement and Managing Finances
7. Mental Health
8. Facing Crisis (Widowhood, Dementia, Disability)

Helpful in Every Area

1. Attending to all parts of **The Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model of Health.**

➤ **Biological/Physical:** Taking care of our bodies, the temple of God, as good stewards. (*1 Cor. 3:16*)

➤ **Psychological/Emotional:** Patterns of thinking, which directly impact how we behave and handle our emotions. (*Prov. 23:7*)

➤ **Social/Relational:** God's plan for us to be in relationships; His second commandment, *Mark 12:31*; ("one another" occurs over 200 times in the Bible)

➤ **Spiritual:** Process of sanctification and growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*1 Peter 3:18*)

Helpful in Every Area

2. Developing **Flexibility** and **Resilience**

➤ *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Phil. 4:11, 12*

➤ *"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Prov. 24:16*

➤ **Flexibility:** The ability to change or persist in behavior according to changing circumstances. ("Bend without breaking")

➤ **Resilience:** The display of positive adaptation despite significant adversity. ("Change without destroying")

Poorly Defined: Thinly Defined, Not Flexible

Example: Soap Bubble

- Very fragile
- Almost anything can pop it.
- When it pops, it disintegrates.
- Hurt easily
- Tends to fear conflict.



Rigid: Highly Defined, Not Flexible

Example: Bowling Ball

- Completely solid & hard
- Nothing penetrates it.
- How this person responds:
 - Harden emotions against others as a way to not hurt.
 - May dismiss others as a way to cope.
 - May be an impatient listener.



Healthy: Defined and Flexible

Example: Rubber Ball

- Has a flexible exterior that withstands most things.
- Bounces back and holds its shape due to internal filling.
- Person responds and can maintain a sense of identity when around others who may disagree.



Where Do You Fall on This Continuum?

Too Soft

Thick Skin/Soft Heart

Too Hard



Area 1: Spiritual Growth

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” Heb. 5:12

You Can Utilize New Opportunities:

How will you choose to invest the new time?

Grow in the Lord?

Perhaps you have never had this much time for:

- Bible Studies, and meditation.
- Making things right.
- Volunteering for others.
- Defending the fatherless.
- Pleading for the widow.
- Develop Flexibility and Resilience for the final tests ahead.

Stagnate and decay?

Maybe your preferred option would be to:

- “Take thine ease, eat drink, and be merry;”
- Relax; you’ve earned all this.
- Try to accumulate some more things...things you can’t take with you.

The Church Needs Your Experience

- The writer of *Hebrews* indicates it is inappropriate if we, who have had many experiences, shirk our duty to the upcoming generation.
- We have an opportunity to *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain...” Rev. 3:2*
- What could you do...
 - In your local congregation?
 - For your national church body?
 - For the universal church of Jesus Christ?

Final Reflections: Am I Ready to Meet Him?

➤ We never know when the final call will come to go home. "The young can die, and the old must." Our appointment in Judgment is quickly approaching...

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Ps. 90:12

➤ How many obituaries in the newspaper are of those younger than us? We are greatly blessed to have the breath of life!

"...unto whomsoever much is given, (including time on Earth, undoubtedly) of him shall be much required." Luke 12:48

Area 1: Spiritual Growth

Recommended Resources:

➤ In a class by themselves:

- The Holy Bible
- Prayer and Meditation

➤ In addition:

- "Spiritual Maturity - Growing From Milk to Meat Discussion Aids" - discussion aid published by ACCFS.
- Bible Studies, especially personal, and also formal.
- Frequent and regular attendance at church services.
- AC Central app, with abundance of sermons and spiritual teaching.

Area 2: Health and Physical Challenges

"But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity."

Eccl. 11:8

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Ps. 90:10

The Body is Wearing Out

- Physically, the strength we once had just isn't there any more.
- Attendance to taking care of this temple is important, but its destiny is the dust.
- Extra attention, and perhaps medication, is now necessary to maintain daily function as before. More doctor visits occur.
- Function, and mobility, gradually or suddenly deteriorate, and our movement and independence become increasingly restricted.
- Some statements become more common, such as, "Huh? What did you say?"
- This is natural. None of this surprises God.

The Mind is Not as Sharp

- Mentally, the processes slow a bit.
- The many experiences of life are of great value, but it may take a little more time to call on their lessons than before.
- *"Let me tell you what my grandfather once told me, seventy years ago."*
- *"Honey, what did you just tell me you wanted from the store?"*
- Our memory becomes a little faded, and we forget more easily.
- This is natural. None of this surprises God.

Your Need For Each Other Increases

- We find ourselves somewhat less independent, and more dependent on each other.
- If we ever tried to change each other, now is the worst time possible; our calling is to love and respect.
- "Senior Citizens in Age" who have not become "Senior Citizens of the Spirit" is unbecoming and tragic. Of all people, we should be mellowed and meek (*"prautes – that temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as just, and therefore without disputing and resisting."*)
- The pace of life seems to have increased; but we cling to each other as joint witnesses of God's mercies for decades.
- This is as it should be. None of this surprises God.

Technology: "What do I do with that thing?"

- Electronic devices will likely become more frustrating as we age, and we find it difficult to keep up.

OPTIONS:

1. Bury our heads in the sand and hope it goes away. (Probably unwise)
2. Start a campaign to change communication back to crank phones and party lines. (Probably unlikely)
3. Engage with the younger generation and value their skills. (We're getting warmer!)
4. Use the problem ("I don't get it,") to be the solution ("I've needed a topic for common ground with the younger generation!").

Area 2: Health and Physical Challenges

Recommended Resources:

- Caregiver Stress and Burnout, website: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/caregiver-stress-and-burnout.htm>
- Managing Pain Before It Manages You, 3rd Ed., by Margaret A. Caudill, MD.

Area 3: Appropriate Family Boundaries

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6: 7, 8

Sometimes, however, someone can step in and interrupt the consequences for an individual, and then that individual has not learned God's basic law of Cause and Effect. (He has not learned a "boundary.")

"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." (Phil. 4:2)

Appropriate Family Boundaries

- Child Struggling to Launch
- Financially Dependent Children
- Spiritually or Emotionally Unstable Children
- Multiple In-Laws Bring Family Change

Your Adult Child May Be Struggling to "Launch"

- This issue much more prevalent than it used to be.
- There will be a need to establish boundaries.
- One of "Boundary Myths" is: *"If I set boundaries, I will hurt others."* (It may cause some discomfort, but not injury.)
- *"Rescuing a person from the natural consequences of his behavior enables him to continue in irresponsible behavior."* (From *Boundaries*, p. 87)
- We can give our children two things: Roots and Wings.

Parent Launching Responsibilities

Hopefully, your teen was guided through a series of rites of passages that included increasing doses of responsibility and freedom. If not, your adult children need to learn it.

1. List adult responsibilities expected of our children.
2. Have a "This is what you can expect from us, now that you're an adult" discussion.
3. Verbalize confidence in their ability to be ready to move on.
4. Listen to them if they tell you they are not ready to leave, but agree on some kind of transition.

Parent Launching Responsibilities

5. Carefully consider your expectations of them regarding grades/work, and their contribution to their fair share toward upkeep of the home. Share this with them.
6. Give them overt and covert messages that you will be okay when they leave.
7. Make peace. Keep in mind the goal – that of helping your adult child develop wings. Don't get involved in useless power struggles and conflicts.

Your Adult Child may be Financially Dependent

- Heard in a principal's office: *"I can't figure out what's wrong with Scott. I give him everything!"*
- Duh...that's what's wrong with Scott.
- Once again, Boundaries is the answer, but this will need to be a gradual process, if parents have not set these before.
- Sit down with Scott and have a heart-to-heart talk about what needs to happen, for his good, then agree on a graduated plan to wean him off dependence.

Your Adult Child May Be Emotionally or Spiritually Unstable

- Emotional instability? May need to call for Counseling, as professionals are trained in helping clients grow in this.
- Unsure if that's the problem? Ask for help, or consult the premarital packet, *"A Guide For Self-Reflection During Marriage Decision Making"* or Appendix B: *"Characteristics of Emotionally Healthy People."*
- Spiritual instability? May need to utilize mentors to walk alongside to guide and teach. Favorite uncle? Aunt? Respected adult?
- Sometimes children listen to others better than their parents.

Multiple In-Laws & Family Changes

- Think a marriage creates one new family?
- Wrong! It creates at least 3 new ones.
- Is that all, just the new couple, and both parents-in-law?
- WRONG AGAIN! Each sibling of the groom and bride are affected, especially if they are married.
- So if the Bride has 2 married siblings, and the Groom has 2 married siblings, that's 7 new families.
- Decisions about holiday gatherings, family vacations, joint gifts to others, etc., all filter through all these people.

Area 3: Appropriate Family Boundaries

Recommended Resources:

- Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No, To Take Control of Your Life, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.
- Fixing Family Friction: Promoting Relative Peace, by David and Claudia Arp, and John and Margaret Bell (from Focus on the Family)
- <http://www.boundariesbooks.com/>
- Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children, by Allison Bottke.

Area 4: The "Empty Nest" and Grand-Parenting

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." II Tim. 1:5

"Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers." Prov. 17:6

Children Were Here - Now They Are Gone!

- It was never God's intent that our children are our possession; they are given to our stewardship for a season.
- If we intended to keep them permanently, we had unrealistic and unscriptural expectations.
- The maintenance of a Parent-Child relationship is not dependent upon geography. Some resources in removing distance barrier are:
 - Letters
 - Phone calls
 - Texting
 - FaceTime

Who is Babysitting the Grandchildren Tonight?

- Children are the responsibility of Parents.
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- Children are the responsibility of Parents.
- Often Grandparents can bless the family with assistance. Many are the young who have been powerfully impacted by a Grandpa or Grandma (or someone who acted like a Grandpa or Grandma).
- Often Grandparents (or people who act like Grandparents) can provide a lasting influence through:
 - Stability and Consistency
 - Teaching and Mentoring
 - Loving and Nurturing
 - Showing how the Walk is Walked.

What Child? What Grandchildren? The Nest was Always Empty! Distresses of the Lonely

- Sarai and Hannah are two examples from thousands of years ago who were childless, and greatly distressed by it. (*Gen. 16:2, 1 Sam. 1:7*)
- Some childless couples feel a great loss of purpose in not parenting the next generation.
- Alternatives to loss of purpose are:
 - Knowing the Apostle Paul was single, and also a "father". (*"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."* 1 Cor. 4:15)
 - Recognition that God's "family" has no generational bounds. Our Heavenly Father has no grandchildren; and His children are all adopted.
 - Recognition that the influence of a father is less dependent on blood ties than influential ties. "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
 - Fostering, formal or informal
 - Mentoring, formal or informal

Area 4: The "Empty Nest" and Grand-Parenting

Recommended Resources:

- "The Season of Grandparenting" by ACCFS.
- "Lonely But Never Alone" by ACCFS.
- "Dealing With Loneliness" by ACCFS.
- *The Power of a Praying Grandparent*, by Stormie Omartian.
- *There's a Reason They Call It GRANDparenting*, by Michele Howe.
- *Great Lessons and Grand Blessings: Discover How Grandparents Can Inspire and Transform Their Grandchildren*, by Elmer and Ruth Towns.

Area 5: Understanding and Meeting Intimacy Needs

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

1 Cor. 7:5

Uniqueness: Older Couples

- Hormone levels drop over time for men and women resulting in several changes:
 - The physical body changes and loses tone.
 - This may affect the level of desire for physical intimacy.
 - This may affect the ability to engage physically in sexual intimacy.
 - For women, it may affect lubrication and result in discomfort.
 - For men, it may affect ability to become physically aroused.

Older Couples: Respect & Honor

- Accept that one of both partners may have a strong desire to continue being intimate.
- Respect there may be greater differences between you and your spouse.
- Women should respect that sex may still be a very important part of your husband's identity and his need for pleasure may remain high in spite of decreased physical response.
 - You will need to be supportive and encouraging of his masculinity if he is less able to engage in sex as he would desire.
- Men should respect that sex may be less pleasurable and may be less comfortable for their wives.

Older Couples: Ways to Respond

- Find additional ways to be physically intimate that are mutually satisfactory.
- Realize there may be more need for thoughtful foreplay.
- Consider a medical consult to determine if there are health conditions that interfere with desire or ability and may be treatable.
 - Consider specific exercises that can strengthen pelvic muscles (i.e., Kegel exercises).
- Be open with each other about ways to be helpful and respectful in love making.

Area 5: Understanding and Meeting Intimacy Needs

Recommended Resources:

- * *Intended for Pleasure*, by Ed Wheat, M.D., and Gaye Wheat.
 - Easy-to-read reference book that combines biblical teaching on love and marriage with current medical information on sex and sexuality.
- * *Sacred Sex: A Spiritual Celebration of Oneness in Marriage*, by Tim Alan Gardner.
 - Reviews God's design for oneness in marriage; a review of Scripture for the higher purpose of marital sex in a way that brings the fulfillment of true oneness.
- * *The Act of Marriage After 40: Making Love for Life*, by Tim and Beverly LaHaye.
 - Easy reading, medically sound book; candidly addresses issues of intimacy for older couples.

Area 6: Retirement and Managing Finances

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- "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." Prov. 27:23*
- "And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'" Luke 18:24*

Retirement: Not specifically addressed in the Bible

- For some employers, we will become less valuable to them, and more costly. We need to understand that the business does not exist to give everyone jobs, but to make a profit.
- This becomes an excellent time, especially for men, to realize their identity needs to become much more than just a work title.
- Many wives will not know how to handle a man being around all the time, and this may be troublesome to her. Will we get in her way?
- Make sure that "finally getting your dream" does not mean for your spouse, "getting her nightmare."
- *"You may not always think alike, but you must always think together."* (Loren Stoller)
- "Retirement" from a job is NOT the same as "Retirement" from life.

Managing Finances: Very Much Addressed in the Bible!

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- Seek spiritual counsel.
 - Seek professional counsel to plan needs for expected lifetime.
 - Every person and couple is different.
 - There are resources if finances are not adequate.
 - Subsidized housing
 - Medicaid for LTC
 - Encourage to look at LTC insurance.
 - Importance of a will.

Area 6: Retirement and Managing Finances

Recommended Resources:

- *Your Money Counts*, by Crown Financial.
- *Total Money Makeover*, by Dave Ramsey.
- *Money and Marriage God's Way*, by Howard Dayton.

Area 7: Mental Health

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. 4:23

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..."

Prov. 23:7

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." II Cor. 10:5

Area 7: Mental Health

- Some mental illnesses become issues in old age.
- Depression is more common.
- Important to differentiate between normal grieving, spiritually healthy looking forward to death, hopelessness or feeling overwhelmed.
- Support groups for dementia.
- Ask church for someone who has been through it to mentor.

Area 7: Mental Health

Recommended Resources

- *Grief, Stress, and Depression: What's Normal and When Should I Be Concerned?*
http://www.accounseling.org/uploaded/Mental_Health/Grief,_Stress_and_Depression_What_is_normal_and_when_should_I_be_concerned.pdf
- https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/mental_health.pdf (Website on "The State of Mental Health and Aging in America")
- *Understanding the Bio- Psycho- Social- Spiritual Model*,
http://www.accounseling.org/uploaded/Mental_Health/Understanding_the_Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual_Model.pdf
- Mental Health <http://www.accounseling.org/mentalhealth>

Area 8: Facing Loss and Crisis

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Heb. 13:3

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." II Cor. 1:4

Facing Loss and Crisis

- Alone Again
- Dementia
- Disability

Alone Again; The Challenges of Widowhood

- Roles now must change, as what was done before by someone else must now be done by me, or someone I delegate.
- A new "self" and identity emerges.
 - Perhaps long ago I went from "me" to "us;" now it's back to "me;"
 - We have often changed roles - we can do it again.
- **It's a very comforting thought that none of this took God by surprise. He intended to help me manage it.**
- A note to those of us not in this role: There are about 78 references to "widow" in the Bible. Making sure we follow the spirit of these references is a big calling!

Dementia

- Will often need new boundaries to provide for safety and care.
- May need Dr. Amador's LEAP Techniques:
 - **Listen** — Without commenting, disagreeing, or arguing.
 - **Empathize** — If you want someone to seriously consider your point of view, be certain he feels you have seriously considered his.
 - **Agree** — Find common ground and stake it out. Yes, there probably is some. Find it!
 - **Partner** — Form partnership to achieve shared goals. Yes, there are probably some of them. Find them!
- Involuntary treatment can be used as a last resort.

Disability

- Counsel to adjust to physical limitations.
- Be realistic about stage of life and changes it brings.
- Understand your Identity is not established around physical abilities.
- What has seemed a "disability" to some did not hinder others.
 - Thomas Edison: Refused surgery for hearing loss, fearing that good hearing would disrupt his thought processes and impede his thinking.
 - Fanny Crosby: "If perfect earthly sight were offered to me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me."

Area 8: Facing Loss and Crisis

Recommended Resources:

- *Alone in Marriage: Encouragement for the Times When It's All Up to You.* by Susie Larson.
 - * Written for women
- *Recovering from Losses in Life*, by H. Norman Wright.
- *Healing a Spouse's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Husband or Wife Dies*, by Alan D. Wolfeit.
- *I AM NOT SICK: I Don't Need Help!: How to Help Someone With Mental Illness Accept Treatment*, by Xavier Amador, Ph.D.
- *Life After Breath: After Her Husband Takes His Last Breath, and After She Tries to Catch Hers*, by Susan VanderPol.
- *How to Care for Aging Parents: A One-Stop Resource for All Your Medical, Financial, housing, and Emotional Issues*, 3rd Edition, by Virginia Morris.
 - * Has chapters on "The Aging Brain," and "Living With Dementia."