

Investing in Future Generations

The Third Age Season



March 2018

THE INSIDE RUNNING

Why is there an explosion of interest in ancestry sites and people working out their genealogy?

I've observed a deep hunger to know where we have come from and the history of how we got here. My teenage son loves talking to seniors – the older the better. Older people can reach further back into history as living bridges to the past.

So if you have grandchildren now, there is a golden opportunity for you to be part of the family story of who they are and their place in the world. How will you make something great out of these opportunities?

As the age of starting families increases, there is a cruel twist that people have shorter windows of time to be grandparents... and lower energy levels! We have to be more intentional about enjoying the blessing of grandchildren. I often see grandparents bringing their grandchildren to church. The parents are missing in action but the grandparents are filling a spiritual void.

What are the ways that we can grasp the opportunities and really maximise each one – both for our own enjoyment and to bless others?

With gratitude

John

John Subritzky



by Peter Goulter

The Third Age reflects the last season of life. (The first season is pre-marriage, the second is marriage and family, and the third is empty nest and the run home to eternity.) The term "Third Age" is a better descriptive than the term "retirement", as retirement is not a biblical concept, but Third Age is.

The Third Age is a season of opportunity as time is released from the commitment to work, which enables you to invest in people. For some the transition from work is immediate and for others it is a progressive reduction over a 1 to 10 year period. Whatever format it arrives in, the reality is that you have more free time available to you.

To avoid the Third Age being a daunting experience, you can plan for it in advance. As you enter this new phase of life, the top priorities remain God first and then your wife. Obviously this phase should also absorb more time invested into your marriage; it is not all about your own activities and interests. With the residual time released from work commitments, your outlook should be legacy-focused - building into your children, your grandchildren and after that, other people that God leads you to invest in.

The building of relationship with your children may require a rebuilding of relationship first, as there may be some historical hurdles of hurt, disappointment, failure, neglect, broken promises etc. Some historical

issues may be of your own making; some may be related to issues regarding a "prodigal" child (as in the story in Luke 15:11-32).

If there are challenges to be faced in rebuilding relationships, then it can be of great benefit to walk through this stage with a small group of older men who can give you counsel and prayer coverage.

There are a number of new opportunities for time investment with your adult children in this season. For example...

Recreation - the sharing of common activity interests. This could include sport, e.g. playing golf, bike riding, gym session.

Family gatherings - weekly family get-togethers over a meal where everyone commits to this time allocation as a family; having coffee at a regular time; having a beer or watching sport together on TV.

Help - the use of your talents and DIY knowledge to prosper your children. Painting their house, building a deck, doing pick-ups for them during their work hours. >





With such joint activities will come opportunities to speak into their lives, to pass on wisdom, or even to say sorry when past failures surface. The closer contact also enables you to gain insight to gauge spiritual health in the home, and the health of the marriage and family. It gives you the chance to be a cheerleader, to acknowledge and encourage right decisions in the family unit.

The more children you have, the greater the time demand. You will need to be wise and ensure balance and equity in time and work favour with your various children. The other danger area is not to rescue your children from their choices or interfere in their decision-making. Manipulation and control will destroy, not build, relationship and legacy.

In some situations you may have to exercise the "sorry, I can't help" button. If it doesn't suit your current time commitments then "No" is an appropriate response. In cases where you are being over-used and possibly abused, then "No" is the best long-term solution for that child and their household. Sometimes saying "I can help out for three hours only" is the right response. Where the job required doesn't suit your physical ability then the right response is "No". There is a time when climbing up on roofs or trimming 20 metre trees is off limits and "No" without feeling guilty is the correct response.

As Third Agers, my wife and I often smile at situations we see in our family households. While decisions that are made are different to how we would have operated in the same situation, the reality is the process is different only, and not wrong. Whether the outcome is better or worse is irrelevant. Even if it is wrong but not catastrophic, then you should stay out of the decision process and smile internally. No matter what the outcome, we are there as mentors and encouragers not controllers. Walk carefully and continue to build relationship, influence and ultimately legacy.

The other big opportunity of this season is time with our grandchildren. In the early years the situation may call for offering partial or complete day respite, so mum can rest or go shopping or have some self-time; or providing daycare so mum can go back to work part time. Young mums always need help and in the early months this

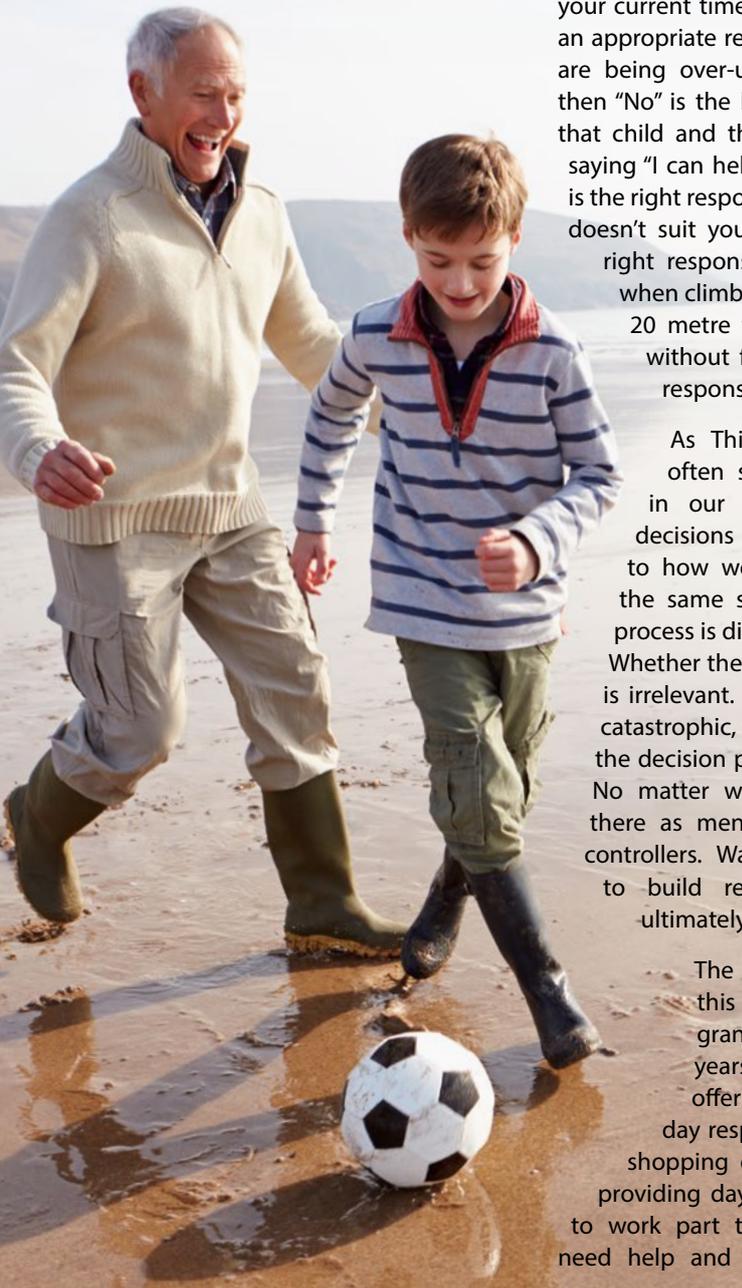
may be primarily the help domain of your wife. Your opportunity comes in the area of entertainment, the spending of time playing with the grandchild or taking them for a walk or stroller ride. As your grandchildren get older there will no doubt be babysitting and sleepover opportunities.

My wife and I have invested greatly in this area and you can see the depth of bond that grows with these children. One of our grandchildren has my wife as the third most important caregiver in his life, and I have a granddaughter who has made me the third most important person in her life. These are precious and important roles built on time investment. The other benefit is the relationship it builds with your child and their spouse.

As a young dad, I seldom took time off work to watch my children's school activities or go on camps etc, but retained all holidays for meaningful times away as a family. But now I have made it a decision that every invitation to a grandchild's activity will be attended (even if it is ballet for a grandson!).

There is also the role of spiritual encouragement of your children and grandchildren. Areas of concern need to be committed to prayer. Wisdom is needed so that you do not manipulate, condemn or criticise. If you are in the situation where your children are not leading their kids towards faith in Jesus Christ, you have a vital role in prayer. Personally I would be cautious about collecting grandchildren and taking them to church, but when they are staying at your house on a Sunday, then they come to church with you. This is your household custom. God can use you and these times to sow faith into their lives through praying with (and for) your grandkids, sharing with them from the Bible or Christian story books, and having meaningful conversations with them about life and God.

Investment in our children and grandchildren should be a priority and it will provide the opportunity to lay a lasting legacy into the next two generations as men and women of God.



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