

AN AGE OF GRACE

Bible Study • Leader Guide

[Please provide each participant a Bible and copy of this study guide.]

Opening Prayer: *O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? (Psalm 71:17–19). Amen.*

“Youth is wasted on the young.” “Age before beauty.” “I’m not as young as I used to be.” “Aging gracefully.”

What other age-related phrases do you hear often? Which have you said yourself?

Our culture seems to be consumed with the aging process.

Why do you think that is? What kinds of messages can Christians give about living life at any age?

Both sets of opening questions are meant to introduce the theme. Women may want to think about the answers silently. Encourage participation if it is provided, but do not let the conversation here overshadow the rest of the Bible study time.

Activity Quiz time: Briefly answer the following questions with your opinions.

Answers will vary.

How old is old? _____ How young is young? _____

What do you consider to be the perfect age? _____

Now, think about this: Would your answers be different if you were twenty years older?

How about twenty years younger?

Again, do not force out-loud sharing; be careful that this does not become a time to target any particular age for criticism. Instead, it can open the doors to empathy if women are comfortable offering their thoughts.

Read about the following women.

Describe who they were. What were they called to do?

You may want to select only a few, or divide the passages into groups if time is limited.

Sarah (Genesis 17:15–21)

Sarah wanted to be a mother for decades, but she did not expect it to happen when she was ninety-one years old! This, however, was the Lord's plan for her.

Miriam (Exodus 2:1–10; Numbers 26:59)

As a young girl, Miriam watched for the well-being of her brother, Moses, whom God would later use to bring His people out of Egypt.

Naomi (Ruth 1:1–5, 15–18; 4:13–17)

Naomi thought her life was over when she lost her husband and adult sons, but she later became a nurse to her grandson, Obed.

Mary (Luke 1:26–38)

Mary was likely a young teenager when she learned of her role as an unwed mother to the Son of God. This would be daunting at any age!

Anna (Luke 2:36–38)

Anna lived most of her long life as a childless widow; she served the Lord at the temple in continual prayer and worship. She was one of the first witnesses of baby Jesus, and she spread the Good News to all who were looking for the Messiah.

Lydia (Acts 16:11–15)

We are not certain of Lydia's age, but she was a wealthy working woman, a seller of purple goods. She and her household were baptized, and she showed hospitality to Paul and Silas.

When describing these biblical servants of God, did you note their ages? If not, take time to go back and do that now. How old do you think each of these women was during the passages given? Further consider this: How may their age have seemed beneficial to their task? Could their ages have been considered an obstacle somehow?

Further discussion about age and roles may vary. These women were different ages with different life situations, but God loved them all and used them all in special ways.

Now, think about the stages of life you have already encountered.

How has God used you at each stage? What are ways you may serve Him in the future?

This can be a meditative question again, but women can witness to one another of God's care in their lives.

Read Job 12:12–13.

What is one blessing that often comes with age? From whom does this blessing come?

Wisdom and understanding can come with age; these gifts are ultimately from God.

Those who exhibit wisdom and understanding can be wonderful loving role models for Christians of all ages.

Read 1 Timothy 4:11–12.

Why would youth be something to "despise" in a young believer? How could it be an asset for young people to set a Christian example?

Inexperience or a difference in interests may be reasons some people may not be kind to younger adults. Enthusiasm and new ideas may be assets young people can bring to the church. Young adults who are witnesses of a Christian lifestyle can be powerful influences in the surrounding culture.

Read Jesus' promises to us in Revelation 22:12–14. Think about God's timeline.

Who is "the beginning"? Who is "the end"? Thanks to the Alpha and Omega, how long will our lives be?

God is the beginning and the end. Thanks to the Alpha and Omega, we will live in heaven with Him forever.

How do these answers change our perspective on age?

Our God is timeless. Jesus is eternal. When we remember that we will live forever, a one hundred-year-old seems very young! We can then be motivated to make our time on earth full of love and witness to our neighbors, that they may live forever with their Savior too.

We can do our sisters in Christ a disservice by not considering them for a task due to age — any age! Women who are bedridden can be prayer warriors and amazing examples of Christian patience. Women who are just entering adulthood can provide insight on how to reach a new generation as well as enthusiasm to serve with new ideas. Women in all stages in between can use their unique combinations of experience, time, and energy to provide service to the Lord and His people.

The answers below will vary for each group. The goal of this section is to help women understand and appreciate those of different ages. Guide discussion so that it focuses on ways to reach out — not single out — and connect with women who may currently be overlooked.

What gifts can younger people bring to the Church?

Answers might include energy, enthusiasm, and physical strength.

What gifts can older people bring to the Church?

Answers might include wisdom, experience, and patience.

What can a mother to grade-schoolers contribute?

Answers might include access to new technologies and abilities.

What can a new grandma contribute?

Answers might include time and experience.

Look around your group.

Is there a gap somewhere in the ages of the people in the room?

Why do you think this is?

Try to reach out to women of this age group.

How can you help them? What ideas do they have for your group? How can you be more available to more women?

How does your current stage in life enable you to serve in special ways?

Think of the next stage of life you will likely encounter.

How will you be able to serve the Lord then?

The women in the Bible listed above were all loved by their Heavenly Father. Some of them were happy with their stage in life. Others were not. All of them experienced God's grace and learned of His perfect timing in their lives. Thanks to our loving Savior, every age we experience is an age of grace — where we experience the forgiveness of Jesus and share the Good News of that grace with those around us.

Closing Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us, Your daughters, no matter our ages! Thank You for giving us eternal life through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Enable us to use our time on earth to serve You and our brothers and sisters in Christ in every age and stage we experience. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

An Age of Grace, written by Lisa M. Clark, St. Louis, Missouri

Copyright © 2015, revised 2023 Lutheran Women's Missionary League. All rights reserved.

lwml.org