



Pastor Casey Wilkerson

July 30, 2017

**A Christ-like Response
Ageism**

(tear here)

NAME: _____

AGE or COLOR GROUP: _____

PRAYER REQUEST: _____

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West Valley Church
Casey Wilkerson
7/30/17

Isms: A Christ-like Response

Ageism

Invite kids: Does anyone know what ageism means? Ageism is prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age. It's when someone is unfair or mean to you because of how old or young you are. Do you have anyone who treats you bad because you are little? How many of you have parents that are not fair with you? Well, sorry, but that's not ageism, that's called parenting.

I have this scientific toy, that was designed to make a noise and light up, but it only works when these two metal pieces are connected. One is the anode, and the other is the cathode. I'm going to need all of your help in order for it to work, and we are going to show everyone else here. This toy needs each of us in order to function the way it was created to. If we, as a church, are all going to live the way God intended for us to, we all need to work together, no matter how old or young you we are. That means we need to obey and learn from our parents, our parents need to learn from us. We also need to learn from others in our church, like our teachers and other role models much older than us, and they need to learn from you too.

Have any of you ever been picked on for being young?

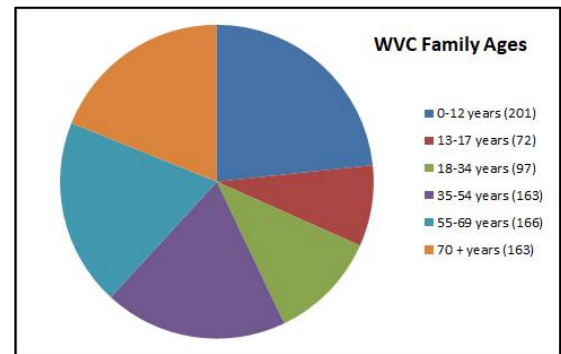
How many of you have heard of Timothy in the Bible? Timothy was young – older than you all, but young compared to the other leaders in the church back then. Paul was someone who taught Timothy a lot, and he told Timothy:

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

That's a lot of pressure to be so good, but even though he was young, a lot was expected from him. I bet your parents have expectations for you all too. They have hopes and dreams of the kind of people you will develop into as you get older. They probably also have expectations for you now. What are some things that your parents expect you to do or not do? They expect you to eat all your dinner, or say "please and thank you", or wash your hands after going to the bathroom.

I have an expectation for you this morning; I need all of your help just like I did with my scientific toy. I want to give you something and you are going to fill it out between now and when service is over, your parents can help you if you need. Have you ever been in service when we have a meet and greet time? Everyone gets up and says "hi" or shakes someone's hand. It's a good time to meet someone new, or reconnect with someone you haven't seen since last Sunday or longer. Well today, did you notice, that we didn't do it at the beginning like usual? We forgot! Just kidding, instead, we are going to do it at the end of the service, but before we do it, I want all of you, and everyone else out there to fill this card out. Most of the adults already got one, did any of you already? It's real simple, you write your name

and age (or color group) and then something you want someone to pray for you. All of you are in the blue age group; look at this slide to double check. This picture shows the breakdown of all the people in our church and what ages they are. This picture will also be up later if you forget. At the end of the service, we will all exchange papers with someone else that is a different age group than us. That way, you pray for someone else older than you, and they pray for you.



Just like my white toy, it doesn't function the way it was designed unless the anode and the cathode are connected. The Church, followers of Jesus don't function the way God intended unless we are connected. By trading your paper with someone older than you, you'll get an easy way to connect with someone else and later on you can pray for them. Pray for the kids.

Throughout this series, we are collecting your questions, observations, or concerns. You can share them in one of several ways: you can use the cards in the seat back in front of you, you can email us at "isms@wvcnaz.com" or you can message us through our WVC Facebook page. At the end of this series, the pastors will take a Sunday morning and have a panel discussion and do our best to respond to your questions and comments. If you have a question about an issue and you were gone when we covered it, you can listen to the sermon on our website, and then submit a question or comment.

I've been looking forward to this sermon for a few months now, because I thought it would be fun to talk about ageism, especially on a 5th Sunday of the month, a day when we usually have the kids in the service. Let's start by contrasting two different people in the Bible as we examine how to have a Christ-like response to ageism, in our world today: Timothy and Abraham. Timothy was a young leader in the church, although he wasn't a child or teenager. For some of you, you might not consider him young at all. He was likely in his 30s, maybe even close to 40. But if you were under 40, in the Mediterranean culture, you were considered "young". Paul on the other hand was considered an "old man" even though he was in his late 50s maybe early 60s. Abraham was 75 when God first promised to make Abraham into a great nation. So if Paul is an old man at 60, what is Abraham? Ancient? Antique? Not only was Abraham 75 when God first promised a great nation coming from him, but it was 25 years until Isaac was born marking the fulfillment of that promise. What if Abraham said, no thanks? What if he had all these excuses for why he couldn't be used by God to do something amazing? He could have told God, "I'm retired now", or "I've done my part" or "ask someone younger" You might think it's funny but these are things I have heard in ministry when I've asked someone older than me to partner in ministry in some way. Abraham added value to his family but also to his community and it didn't matter if he was old or not. The things he did and the ways he added value likely changed as he got older. We all have to learn to do things a little differently as we get older. I am starting to learn that I'm not as young as I once was. I play with my brother-in-law and a few friends on a softball team. I played baseball in college but I'm not as fast as I was in college, but I'm still pretty fast running around the bases. But after running all night, I'm sore in spots I don't remember ever being sore in. We all have to get used to our bodies aging – sometimes we get bigger, or skinnier, or have to wear glasses, or we get gray hair.

Proverbs 16:31 which tells us that:

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”

Some of you have gained that crown of glory. Some of us may never get a chance to gain that crown. There is a good chance; my hair will be gone before it has a chance to turn gray. So for those of you lucky enough to get that gray crown let me read a word of caution towards how you treat those with no hair.

2 Kings 2:23-25

From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. “Get out of here, baldy!” they said. “Get out of here, baldy!” He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.

That is out of the Bible – 2 Kings 2:23-25. I can almost see Elisha walking away shaking his head, “That’ll teach those young punks”. A side note: how fast are those bears to maul 42 boys? Now that is fast food. Another side note, this mauling had more to do with the prophet of God being disrespected as a prophet, not so much about being teased for no hair.

I was excited to preach on Ageism today, not because I wanted to share that little passage with you, and not because it’s such a hot topic, because honestly, it’s not. At least not like sexism or racism. We see much more subtle aspects to ageism everyday though. Like when we joke about kids these days; or that one family member who is old and always wants to talk about life when they were young and they keep bringing up the same story and retelling it over and over. I don’t have anyone like that in my family, but you get the point.

I was excited about talking about ageism because I think it’s important for us to not just acknowledge that our church has lots of different age groups, but celebrate it and be reminded that the work of West Valley Church is happening because we have every age group and because we are working together.

What’s the Christ-like response to ageism? Don’t do it. If we are called to love others as Jesus loves us, then we won’t show discrimination towards someone, anyone, whether it’s based on age or anything else. Luke 18:15-17 is a well-known passage about Jesus and what he thought about those of a different age. And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying:

“Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

Jesus knew that children were a good example for us; he knew we could learn a lot from children.

My family spent a week in Victoria, BC last week, and this was probably the best vacation yet with my children. One of my favorite things to do is watch my kids react to situations

around them, or sometimes just watch them play. You can learn a lot from a child by watching them. While we were in Victoria, we went to the Bug Zoo. Tons of bugs, some you get to hold, and you have a tour guide to explain and teach a little about them. As soon as the guide would bring a bug out, Jordan, my daughter would say right away, "I want to hold him." She held every bug, and she kissed a cockroach. I took a picture of it, so when she starts dating, I'll have that to show the boys and hopefully buy us some time. I learned that my daughter is more outgoing than I realized.



We were still on vacation last Sunday, so I missed Pastor Olivia Metcalf joining us. Her sermon is online if you haven't listened to it. As I listened, I heard her say something similar that I was planning on saying because it ties in so much with ageism. She encouraged everyone to look around – if you're young look at those older than you and learn from them, if you're old look at those younger and learn from them, if you are in the middle, then look at those older and younger. But the point was that we are part of a big picture and we need each other if we are going to succeed in accomplishing God's plan for us and others around us that He loves.

Let me reread Paul's words to Timothy, but this time, I want you to imagine he is writing to you. His words apply very much to us even if you aren't "young".

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

We should all set an example for others in what we say and do. We all have people who watch us and learn from watching us. So we need to be a good example; that way they learn good things from us.

I want to speak to just the younger people for a minute. I'm going to include myself in this, since I'm younger than Timothy. Young people, we don't know everything. We need those that are older than us and we can learn a lot from them. If you get the opportunity to get to know someone older, do it, learn from them and make the most of that opportunity. You are part of the BIG picture.

Okay old people, older than Timothy people, as old as Paul and Abraham or even older people. I've wrestled with how to say this best, so I think I'll just say it. "You are not dead yet." It doesn't matter how old you are, you are still part of the big picture; you are still a valuable part of the church. Don't let your age be an excuse to not see the opportunities given to you by God. Make the most of the time you still have.

The anode and the cathode need to connect to each other in order to do what they were created to do. God created you and has plans for you regardless of how old you are; we need to connect with each other so we can have the best opportunity of doing what God has planned for us.

Before I pray, remember, we are all part of a BIG picture. We need each other, young and old. Take the bottom part to your notes and after service, trade it with someone who's in a different age bracket. You don't even have to talk to them. Just trade the ripped part of your notes and go home, this week pray for that person and whatever they wrote – that is all you have to do. If you want to get to know them more, great. The goal is to connect the different age groups in our church, so hopefully, if you are a kid, you don't trade with you mom – trade with someone else. Parents, I would encourage you to know who your kid trades with, so when they pray for that person, you know who they are praying for.

In church we should celebrate a crying baby and gray hair. We need each other. On your way in you may have heard the song our worship team was singing, it's based on Psalm 133:1. It is good when God's people live in unity.

Ending Prayer