enditnow® Emphasis Day

Resource Packet

August 23, 2025

Sermon

Abuse of the Elderly:

“Honor Your Father and Your Mother”

Written by Heather-Dawn Small and Raquel Arrais

First Published in 2007

Children’s Story

Senior Center Visit

Written by Deena Bartel-Wagner

Seminar

Elderly Abuse: How the Church Can Care and Protect

Written by Raquel Arrais

enditnow®

Adventists Say No to Violence

Prepared by Department of Women’s Ministries

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

On behalf of the enditnow® team of General Conference departments

12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD, 20904-6600 USA

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GENERAL CONFERENCE

WORLD HEADQUARTERS



WOMEN’S MINISTRIES

June 2025

Dear Sisters,

Warm greetings from the General Conference Women’s Ministries Department!

Here is the enditnow® packet prepared by our beloved Heather-Dawn Small and Raquel Arrais for the 2007 enditnow® Emphasis Day. At the end of 2023, Heather-Dawn suggested revisiting this topic on this special day in 2025. And we gladly do it in her memory—and because this topic is too important to forget. We are thankful to Raquel for revising this material.

The Bible teaches us to care for and show respect to aging people. In some cultures, it is a must, but, unfortunately, in others, it is a forgotten value. The elderly are often ignored, mocked, pushed to life’s margins, or left to themselves by their children and friends. This is not how God planned it to be. Let us refresh our knowledge on this issue and advocate for respect, care, and the involvement of elderly people in our lives. Let us remind ourselves that they deserve to be loved and appreciated. In the Bible, we find a promise that aged people who put their trust in the Lord “will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age” (Psalm 92:13, 14, NKJV). Is your church ready to help God realize this promise in the lives of aged people? What actions should be taken?

May God impress you with wonderful ideas! May your church be known for its outstanding care and love for the elderly!

Blessings,

A close-up of a sign

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Galina Stele, DMin

Director

Women’s Ministries

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

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# About the Authors

**Heather-Dawn Small** passed away January 2, 2024. At the time, she held the position of director for Women’s Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Heather-Dawn is the wife of Pastor Joseph Small and the mother of a daughter Dalonne and a son Jerard.

Prior to coming to the General Conference in 2001, Heather-Dawn held the position of Children’s and Women’s Ministries director for five years for the Caribbean Union Conference, located in the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Heather-Dawn earned a master’s degree in Leadership with emphasis in pastoral care to women. She was a candidate for a doctoral degree in Inter-Cultural Studies.

Heather-Dawn loved air travel, reading, embroidery, scrapbooking, and stamp collecting and she enjoyed ministry to women. As she traveled the world she had three passions—to see more women involved in evangelism, to encourage women to be involved in ministry to others—especially young women, and to share the joy that God had given her in spite of life’s many challenges. Her favorite word was *joy* and her favorite saying was “Don’t let anyone steal your joy.”

**Raquel Arrais** is the Women’s Ministries director as well as the Children’s and Family Ministries director for the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. She formerly was the Women’s Ministries Associate director at the General Conference for about 17 years. She has two sons, Tiago and Andre, who are both pastors, and daughters-in-law, Paula and Nathalia and four grandchildren. Raquel grew up in a pastoral family and is a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist. Raquel is a teacher at heart and is currently writing her thesis in Islamic Studies for the Middle East University in Lebanon. She loves reading, walking, playing the piano, and collecting pictures of women’s faces. She enjoys spending time with women, ministering to them, and learning from them. She desires to see more women accept God’s call and become involved in the mission of the church. Her favorite word is courage, and her favorite Bible text is Joshua 1:9.

Deena Bartel-Wagner is the owner of Verbal Oxygen Creative Services. She has worked as a freelance writer, editor, and journalist for 35 years. She has authored hundreds of articles that have appeared in Adventist and other Christian publications as well as in secular publications. Among Adventist publications, Deena has written for the GraceLink Sabbath School Lessons, the Adventist Review, Collegiate Quarterly, Adult Bible Study Guide, Winner, Guide Magazine, and Adventist Mission. Not limiting her writing to print publications, she is also the scriptwriter for Mission Sonlight. She was recently accepted as a book reviewer for Thomas Nelson Publishing and will be blogging her thoughts about book topics ranging from politics to biographies and theological essays. Deena, currently, is the publications editor for the General Conference Department of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and oversees the production of two quarterly journals, The Adventist Chaplain and For God and Country. Deena simultaneously earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska and an Associate of Science Degree in Radio Broadcasting from Barton County Community College.

Experiencing other cultures is one of the opportunities that Deena values in developing her writing voice. She has lived and worked in Thailand, the Marshall Islands, the Chuuk Islands and the Republic of Congo. While in the Congo, her editorial skills were put to the test as she edited publications for the World Health Organization in both English and French.

Deena is married to Gary, a retired pastor, and the Southeast Asia Regional Director for Gospel Outreach. Their family includes their three children, Justin, Ashley and Jordan, their daughter-in-law Ashley, and three granddaughters. When she is not writing, you will find Deena following her other passions of backpacking, breadmaking, reading anything historical, and tracking down the perfect bar of chocolate.

# Program Notes

Please feel free to translate, adjust, and edit the resource packet according to your division’s needs. Include the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet according to your cultural audience. When your division has translated the assigned packet for French, Portuguese, and Spanish, please send us a digital file to share with our sisters who need it. Check our website for additional translated packets that you may be able to use.

# Scripture References

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# A Suggested Order of Worship Service

Call to Worship

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading Exodus 20:12, NKJV

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”

Hymn of Praise: 526 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“Because He Lives”

Pastoral Prayer

Children’s Offering and Story

“Senior Center Visit”

Call for the Offering

Special Music or Hymn

Sermon

“Abuse of the Elderly: ‘Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother’ ”

Hymn of Response: 311 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“I Would Be Like Jesus”

Closing Prayer

—End—

# Children’s Story

Senior Center Visit

Written by Deena Bartel-Wagner

Tony slumped in his seat and groaned. What could Mr. Sanders be thinking? A field trip to the Senior Center sounded totally boring. “I do not want to go see a bunch of old people,” Tony said to his friend Joey. “We will not have anything to talk about!”

“Yeah,” agreed Joey. “Besides that, old people smell funny and half the time they cannot hear what you are saying!”

“What makes this even worse is the assignment Mr. Sanders gave us to do ahead of time,” said Tony. “How am I going to write questions to ask these people? I understand that he wants us to learn about having respect for people older than us; but having to talk to them just seems scary.”

Every time Tony and Joey talked about what they would do and say, Tony felt like there was a boulder lodged in his stomach. He was worried that he would be trapped at the senior center with nothing to say to the people and that they would just sit and stare at each other.

The days passed, and finally field trip day arrived. Sitting on the bus and staring out the window, Tony sighed as they pulled into the parking lot. Mr. Sanders stood up at the front of the bus and made one last announcement. “When you get inside, you will be introduced to the person you are assigned to for today. Remember that your assignment is to learn about them and what their lives have been like.”

Tony hung back and made sure he was at the end of the line as the students filed into the center. *Maybe there will not be enough people to go around and I will not have to talk to anyone*, Tony thought silently.

It did not take long for all of the students to find their partner. Soon Tony was being led over to a man sitting near a window. “Tony, I would like for you to meet George,” said Mr. Sanders. “I think you are going to have a great time getting to know him.”

“Yeah, right,” Tony mumbled, “Whatever.”

“Hello there, young man,” said George. “From the look on your face, I would say you do not want to be here.”

Even though he was startled by what George said, Tony shrugged his shoulders and said, “You are right. I do not.”

“Let me guess,” said George. “You think we do not have anything in common; we cannot see; and, even worse, we smell funny.”

Tony’s mouth opened in surprise. “How did you know Joey and I talked about that?”

George laughed, “Tony, we are not so different. When I was a boy your age, I thought the same thing about old people. So, see, we have at least one thing in common.”

Tony sat down in the chair next to George. “Maybe this will not be so bad after all,” he said. “So tell me what it is like being old.”

George sighed. “You know many people forget that people my age were young once. They do not remember that we could move quickly and hear things easily. We even liked to have fun!”

“What did you do for fun?” Tony asked.

“When I was your age, I loved to play soccer,” said George. As Tony listened to

George’s stories, he forgot about being nervous.

“You look like you are having a good time after all,” George said.

“I guess I am,” Tony admitted. “We have a lot more in common than I thought we would.”

“That is the problem with many people,” said George. “They see someone who is older than them and think they do not have anything to talk about. That can lead to all kinds of problems.”

“What do you mean?” asked Tony.

“Not talking can lead to misunderstandings,” said George. “I have friends who have had people mistreat them because they did not have any respect for older people. The disrespect comes because they have never learned that older people are just like them. Instead, they are scared of them or they see them as an easy target. Some of my friends have been pushed on buses. Others have been hit or slapped—even by their own children. I had one friend who ended up in the hospital with broken bones because a gang did not like it that he was walking down the sidewalk.”

“Wow! I did not know things like that happened to people just because they were older,” said Tony. “It is not right for someone to pick on you just because of your age. Is there anything I can do about it?”

“Sure there is,” answered George. “You have made a good start today. Just coming and getting to know me will help you understand that people my age have feelings. Sometimes we may be having a bad day because we have more aches and pains, but we still like company.

“You also can help your friends to understand how important it is to show respect to us. You know the Bible talks about showing respect to those older than you and that this will help you to have a happier life.”

“I see what you mean,” said Tony. “I guess Mr. Sanders had a pretty good idea to have us come here today. I am going to talk to some of my other friends who are not here. I want them to understand what I learned today. I have one other question for you, though.”

“What is that?” asked George.

“Could we get together again,” asked Tony.

“Is this another class assignment?” asked George.

“No, I just want to hang out with you and see what else I can learn,” said Tony with a grin.

“Sounds good to me,” said George. “I will introduce you to some of my other friends. I know you are going to like them too.”

—End of Story—

**Activities to Teach Respect for Elders**

1. Record an interview with the senior citizens in your congregation. Ask them to tell you one story about their lives from a time when they knew God was leading them. Some questions the children also can ask include: When and where were you born? Who were your parents and grandparents? What do you remember about them? Did you have brothers and sisters? What do you remember best about them? What are some of the things you remember enjoying while you were growing up? What was your most exciting adventure?
2. Plan a storybooking party. Use paper, crayons, markers, and other art supplies. Have students and seniors make storybooks about one event in their lives that was important to them. Split the group into teams and have them share the stories and books with each other.
3. Organize a group of children and seniors to sing special music together in church. Plan practice times and pick a song that everyone can learn and sing together. Some suggestions include “Jesus Loves Me,” “This Little Light of Mine,” or “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds.”
4. Role-play the following and see how the children would react. After the role-playing, ask the children to discuss their feelings. How did the child who lived next to the elderly couple feel? How did the friends feel? When you make fun of someone who is older what does this take away from you?
   1. Have one child imagine that he lives near an elderly couple. Two or three of his friends are visiting him and they see the two old people. The friends start making fun of the elderly people behind their backs. Ask the child “What, if anything, do you say to your friends? What might happen if your neighbors overhear what is going on?”
5. Help students who are interested in music create rhythm instruments, such as maracas, wooden clappers, and music mitts. Then form a band with the students and the older members of your congregation. Practice and play special music on Sabbath.
6. If you have students interested in sewing, help them to make “lap robe quilts” and deliver them to an elder care home. Use this as an activity to introduce the children to residents they can adopt as “grandparents.” Plan other activities that are not just tied to holidays.
7. If you have students who are artists, have them create a mural of the young and the elderly in your church congregation. Celebrate all of the age groups by having an unveiling on a Sabbath when your service gives special recognition to the wisdom and leadership of those who are in the winter stages of their lives.
8. Have several elderly members of your congregation meet with your students and talk about the challenges they face everyday—difficulty buttoning buttons, opening tight lids on jars, turning the handles of a can opener, getting in and out of the tub, bending over to pick something up, and so on. Other ideas that they can talk about include the challenges of how younger people tend to ignore their wisdom and advice; being lonely; or being fearful of scams and abuse. Also have them talk about some of the positive parts of being older—they can travel; there is more free time to do the things they like; they can volunteer to help in the community; and so on.

# Children’s Handout

**Children’s Activities**

CIRCLE the angel emoji if the behavior toward the elderly is respectful and crying emoji if the behavior is wrong.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Give up your seat for an elderly gentleman. | A yellow smiley face with a halo on its head  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A yellow face with tears  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |
| 2. | Punch your grandma when she refuses to give you money. | A yellow smiley face with a halo on its head  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A yellow face with tears  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |
| 3. | Make fun of the way old people walk and talk. | A yellow smiley face with a halo on its head  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A yellow face with tears  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |
| 4. | Help an elderly couple cross the street. | A yellow smiley face with a halo on its head  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A yellow face with tears  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |
| 5. | Read to an old neighbor who cannot see clearly. | A yellow smiley face with a halo on its head  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A yellow face with tears  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |

UNSCRAMBLE the letters to find out what the Bible says about how we should treat each other.

RECA

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Ephesians 4:32 James 5:16

John 15:17 1 Corinthians 12:15

# Sermon

**Abuse of the Elderly: “Honor Your Father and Your Mother”**

Written by Heather-Dawn Small and Raquel Arrais

**Introduction**

The story is told of a young man who treated his parents in a very devious manner. When his parents were of an age when they could no longer work and needed his care and sustenance, he said to them, “I will not look after you. I am giving the money I would use to help you to the church; and because it is for God, I will not be dishonoring you, and I will be blessed.”

Can you imagine the shock on the faces of this couple as their son said these words to them? Who would look after them, pay for their medical bills, and provide their food and shelter. All of this was being done in the name of religion! How could he feel that giving this money to God would be a blessing to him?

What would you say to this young man? Let me share with you what Jesus said. You can read the entire story in Mark 7:5–13. Jesus exposed the Pharisees as being self-centered and having no love for the very people they served. The fact that they would excuse a child from the responsibility of caring for their parents by giving the money to the church was inexcusable. Jesus referred to it as honoring Him with one’s lips and not with the heart.

The fifth commandment states “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

The Amplified Bible gives us a clearer understanding of this text. It reads “Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20:12, AMPC).

These are familiar words to many of us. We learned them at church school or maybe Pathfinders or maybe they were a memory verse in Children’s Sabbath School. When you think of this text, “honor your father and your mother,” what does it mean to you?

I want to share with you a problem that is becoming more prevalent in countries around the world. And this is not a problem that is limited to any particular country, culture, race, or class of people; this is a problem that stretches beyond each of these boundaries.

Over the years on enditnow® Emphasis Day, we have shared information on child abuse, spousal abuse, caring for those who have been abused, and protecting the abused. On this day, however, we would like to focus on a different type of abuse—one that is a growing problem. And that is the problem of abuse of the elderly.

Now I know some of you may be saying to yourselves, “Abuse of the elderly, what is that?” Or you may be saying, “There is no such thing as abuse of the elderly. Who would abuse an old person?” But let me share with you some information about abuse of the elderly and then we will discuss this some more.

I would like for you to keep in mind our opening text; there also is one more verse that we need to read before we discuss this topic some more. Turn with me to Proverbs 23:22. Solomon advises his son, “Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” The *Message* Bible paraphrase makes it even more understandable: “Listen with respect to the father who raised you, and when your mother grows old, don’t neglect her.”

This afternoon we will share with you a seminar on this topic of abuse of the elderly—and what we can do to help. We will give you much more information and share handouts so that you can understand the dangers of this problem. But for now, let me share with you a few facts about this problem of abuse of the elderly and what God says about it.

According to the World Health Organization, abuse and neglect of older adults can be a single or a repeated act. It can occur in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority.[[1]](#footnote-1)

This abuse can be physical (such as hitting), emotional, verbal (such as name calling, putting down), financial (such as taking money or property), sexual, or spiritual. Some types of abuse of older adults involve a violation of their rights. Financial abuse is probably the most common form of abuse of the elderly. And just as the young man in Mark’s story abused his parents in the name of religion, today religious people sometimes abuse their parents—sometimes intentionally, sometimes without thought.

As mentioned in Proverbs, neglect also is abuse. This would involve not doing something, such as providing the older person with food, shelter, medication, care, or meaningful and personal contact.

Many older adults experience more than one form of abuse and neglect. The perpetrators may be children, a spouse, or even grandchildren. But they also can include friends, neighbors, care providers, landlords, or any individual in a position of power, trust, or authority. Abuse can take place in the home, in a residential care setting (such as a nursing home), or in the community.

**What God Expected From Us**

Now let’s go back to the story we found in Mark 7. Would you consider what this man did to his parents to be abuse? Well maybe you would and maybe you would not, but, as you see in this verse, Jesus did. He said that the Pharisees had made “the word of God of no effect through [their] tradition” (verse 13). It is clear that it is the duty of children, if their parents are poor, to relieve them as far as they are able. If children deserve to die who curse their parents as in the scriptures Jesus quoted in verse 10 (Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9), how much more those that starve them, ignore them, or abuse them in any other manner.

The basic attitude in abuse of the elderly is disrespect and disregard for those who are now considered older persons. There are some cultures where the elderly are highly regarded, where they are honored and respected. Unfortunately, some of those cultural values are becoming more rare. But in other countries when a person reaches a certain age, it seems as if they have outlived their usefulness. They are seen as persons who have nothing to contribute anymore; they are problematic and children and other family members would be happy to get rid of them. They are just too much trouble. These sound like harsh words; but we are dealing with what is a real problem for our senior citizens.

What does God expect of us? The commandment tells us to honor our parents. In Leviticus 19:32, we read “Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord” (NIV).

What does it mean to honor and respect the elderly? It means cultivating a feeling or attitude of admiration and deference toward somebody or something, consideration or thoughtfulness, to treat a person with due care, regard, obedience, and courtesy.

**Biblical Examples**

The Bible gives us many examples of the manner in which God treated the elderly. These persons were advanced in age, yet God honored them.

*The first person who comes to mind is Abraham.* When God promised Abraham to make a great nation through him, Abraham was 75 years old. God could have used a younger man, maybe Lot, who was much younger and had far more energy. But God chose Abraham. Why? Because God knew that Abraham possessed the maturity and the experience to deal with what God was placing on him. God knew that for many, many years Abraham would have to hold on to a promise without any visible evidence of it becoming true. As the years went by, it became more difficult to believe that it would come true.

The kind of person that God needed, He found in Abraham. The belief in God, the obedience to His every Word that Abraham possessed comes only as we mature. In Job 12:12 it says, “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding” (KJV).

*Then there is Moses.* Have you ever considered why God allowed Moses to spend forty years looking after sheep before sending him to Egypt as God’s mouthpiece? When Moses slew the Egyptian slave master, he was a young man—forty years of age, strong and self-confident. But this was not what God needed. He needed a man who would be obedient to His voice, always put God first, a man strong in faith and courage. These are the traits that God developed in Moses during the forty years in Midian; and when the time was up, when Moses had matured—a process that only comes with time—then God called him to the task.

*Let us consider Noah.* God called Noah when he was hundreds of years old. It is interesting to note that Noah had three able-bodied sons. They were many years younger than Noah, strong and fit and quite able to do as God needed. Yet God chose Noah, the senior citizen. By doing this, God showed respect for the elderly because He gave Noah the vision, the idea, the revelation of what would happen. To his sons was given the role of being Noah’s support and strength. But the message came to Noah.

As you read your Bible, you will find many such examples. Let me share with you one more: John the beloved disciple. We know that Jesus enjoyed his youthfulness and did much to encourage him. But at what point in John’s life did God give John the revelation of the future?

Ellen G. White writes: “The history of John affords a striking illustration of the way in which God can use aged workers. When John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, there were many who thought him to be past service, an old and broken reed, ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him still. Though banished from the scenes of his former labor, he did not cease to bear witness to the truth. Even in Patmos he made friends and converts. His was a message of joy, proclaiming a risen Saviour who on high was interceding for His people until He should return to take them to Himself. And it was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Amazing! What a wonderful example of God’s respect for the elderly. He may have been aged and enfeebled, but John was enriched with the experiences of his lifelong walk with God.

**God Cares for and Respects the Elderly**

We read again, on that same page from Ellen White’s book, that the elderly “may have made mistakes, but from their failures they have learned to avoid errors and dangers. . . . They have borne test and trial, and though they have lost some of their vigor, the Lord does not lay them aside. He gives them special grace and wisdom.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

*We also find the story of Elisha and the bears.* What happens when the elderly are not respected? Elisha was apparently old, or at least approaching old age, because we are told he was bald. When some youths made fun of him, they were killed by bears. Of course, God not only would not want anyone to make fun of His prophet, but He also wanted them to respect age (2 Kings 2:23–25).

In both the Old and New Testaments there are many admonitions to care for the destitute. And widows are mentioned often. By definition, many widows are elderly. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He was particularly attuned to the needs of widows, raising to life the son of one widow, healing others, and showing respect and honor for the widow who gave her two mites.

Is it still God’s intention that we regard the elderly with respect? The Bible says that God does not change; based on this alone we can answer confidently that it still is God’s intention that we treat the elderly with respect and honor.

Ellen White tells us in the book *Daughters of God* that God holds each child responsible if they neglect the care of their parents, and He takes note of their disregard for their parents.[[4]](#footnote-4)

I know many of you may be patting yourselves on the back thinking that you have neither hit your parents nor denied them the care they needed. But have you raised your voice to them in anger? Have you called them unkind words or names? Have you sat in a bus seat and left an elderly person standing? Do we neglect to seek their advice? Or do we feel they are old fashioned and outdated in their thinking and do not understand the times in which they live? If you are not sure, ask them. Let them tell you what they see, hear, and feel. Psalm 71:9, 18, NIV, sums up, pretty well, what many senior citizens would say to us:

Do not cast me away when I am old;

do not forsake me when my strength is gone. . . .

Even when I am old and gray,

do not forsake me, my God,

till I declare your power to the next generation,

your mighty acts to all who are to come.

We have neglected our elderly for too long. Our young people are missing the wisdom and gifts of the elderly. They will treat them as we do. Look at how many senior citizens in your church are involved in the work of the church in every way. Many of them want to love us and share with us the wisdom of their lives. Take some time to get to know them; you may be amazed at their sense of humor and wisdom.

**What Can We Do as a Church?**

We need to look at this problem as individual families, and we need to look at it as a church.

In our families, are we seeing to it that our elderly relatives are being cared for? Perhaps past hurts have separated us. But that does not justify our neglect of them now. In Bible times, they did not have old-age insurance or pensions or any type of government social security as many countries do now. But we still need to see that our elderly relatives have comfort and joy in their old age. In the United States, there was a news story of an old man who lived alone. He died, and he was not even found for a whole year! Where was his family, his community, his church?

As a church, what are we doing for our elderly members, particularly the shut-ins. Does anyone provide transportation for them if that is needed? Do we visit them? Is Communion taken to them if they are unable to attend services? Does anyone check to make sure that they are receiving the care they deserve? How about helping with their housework or yard or repairs to their home? We have neglected them for too long and God is calling us today, at this time, to honor our parents and respect the elderly.

**Conclusion**

Returning to the text we looked at earlier in Proverbs 23, let us read it once again and read the verses that follow as well. In the *Message* Bible, we read:

Listen with respect to the father who raised you,

and when your mother grows old, don’t neglect her.

Buy truth—don’t sell it for love or money;

buy wisdom, buy education, buy insight.

Parents rejoice when their children turn out well;

wise children become proud parents.

So make your father happy!

Make your mother proud! (verses 23–25).

Whether abuse of the elderly is from greed—we think we can get their money—or it is because of anger, retaliation, or just plain-old sin, it hurts everyone. Conversely, treating the elderly well, whether they are parents, others in our care, or church members, we are all blessed. And that is what God wants for us. That is why He gave the commandment, “Honor your father and your mother” in the first place. And that is why He rebuked the Pharisees in our story in Mark. He does not want anything to sidetrack His divine plan. Even today, He tells us to stop the abuse of the elderly. “Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20:12, AMPC). Then we can do as it says in Psalm 148:12, 13, “Both young men and maidens, old men and children! Let them praise and exalt the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted and supreme! His glory and majesty are above earth and heaven!” (AMPC). In the last days of earth’s history, the culmination of time, the young and the elderly work together. We read this in Joel 2:28, 29, NIV:

“And afterward,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your old men will dream dreams,

your young men will see visions.

Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

God does not cast off, ignore, or “write off” the elderly. He appreciates, empowers, respects, and values them. So should we!

—End of Sermon—

# Seminar

Elderly Abuse: How the Church Can Care and Protect

Written by Raquel Arrais

Objective:

To raise awareness of *elderly abuse*, recognize the signs, and equip the church to *care for and protect* the elderly in their congregations and communities.

Key Scripture:

*“Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone”* (Psalm 71:9, NIV).

Seminar Outline

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

* Welcome and opening prayer
* Icebreaker: “Who is an elderly person who has greatly impacted your life?”
* Overview of seminar goals:
  + Understanding *elderly abuse*
  + Recognizing warning signs
  + Learning what the *church can do*

💬 Discussion Question: Why do you think elderly abuse is often overlooked?

II. Understanding Elderly Abuse (15 minutes)

1. What Is Elderly Abuse?

Elderly abuse is any form of mistreatment that *harms or endangers* older adults, including:

* *Physical Abuse*—Hitting, pushing, improper restraint
* *Emotional Abuse*—Humiliation, threats, neglect
* *Financial Exploitation*—Theft, scams, misuse of funds
* *Neglect*—Failing to provide for basic needs
* *Spiritual Abuse*—Isolation from church or faith-based activities

*Illustration:* An elderly church member is financially manipulated by a caregiver and slowly becomes withdrawn from church life.

2. Biblical View of Caring for the Elderly

* *Leviticus 19:32*—“Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly” (NIV).
* *1 Timothy 5:8*—“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives . . . has denied the faith” (NIV).
* *James 1:27*—We are called to care for the vulnerable.

💬 Discussion Question: How do we see God’s heart for the elderly in Scripture?

III. Recognizing the Signs of Elderly Abuse (15 minutes)

1. Warning Signs of Abuse

* *Unexplained injuries* (bruises, burns, fractures)
* *Sudden behavioral changes* (withdrawal, depression)
* *Fear of a caregiver or family member*
* *Unpaid bills, missing funds, financial hardship*
* *Poor hygiene, malnutrition, bedsores (neglect)*

*Illustration:* A once-active elderly member stops attending church, avoids social interaction, and seems afraid when asked about their caregiver.

💬 Discussion Question: *Have you ever noticed signs of elder abuse in your community? What was your response?*

IV. What Can the Church Do? (20 minutes)

1. Be a Watchful Community

* Train *pastors, elders, deacons, and members* to recognize and report abuse.
* Visit elderly church members *regularly* (home, nursing homes).
* Encourage seniors to have *trusted accountability partners* (spiritual and financial).

2. Create a Safe Church Environment

* *Elderly Ministry Programs*—Support groups, home visits, social activities
* *Financial Awareness Workshops*—*Educate seniors on scams and fraud*.
* *Prayer and Counseling Services*—Offer spiritual and emotional care.

3. Advocate and Intervene

* Work with *local authorities* to report abuse.
* Provide *emergency assistance* (food, shelter, legal aid).
* Offer *respite care* for overburdened caregivers.

*Illustration:* A church creates a “Senior Care Team” that checks in on elderly members weekly.

💬 Discussion Question: What practical steps can your church take to protect elderly members?

V. Taking Action: A Commitment to Protect (10 minutes)

💬 Group Activity:

* Each participant should write *one action* they can take to help prevent elderly abuse.
* Discuss ways the church can implement a *Senior Protection Ministry*.

VI. Closing Prayer and Encouragement (10 minutes)

* *Final Scripture*: Proverbs 31:8, 9—“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” (NIV).
* Pray for *wisdom, protection, and compassion* for the elderly.

Conclusion:

The church must be a place where *the elderly are cherished, protected, and valued*. By being aware, proactive, and Christlike in our care, we can *honor God* by honoring our elders.

—End of Seminar—

Please view the original 2007 packet for more ideas and resources: https://women.adventist.org/women-s-ministries-emphasis-day-archives.

1. “Abuse of Older People,” World Health Organization Newsroom, June 15, 2024, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. White, *Reflecting Christ*, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)