

# From Cradle to Crown

Growing through the Stages of Life to Retirement

# Introduction

- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- What do you want to become when you grow up?
- Stages of human development
  - Infancy
  - Children
  - Youth
  - Adulthood (Young adult, Midlife, Retirement)
- Predictable development issues associated with each stage

# Life-Stages in the Bible

- “I am writing to you, dear **children**, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. <sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one. <sup>14</sup> I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 Jn 2:12-14)

# Applying Erikson Life Stages Psycho-Social Analysis to ORPC Ministry Context

		Children (6-12)	Youths (13-19)	Young Adults (20-30)	Adults (31 to 64)	Senior Adults (above 65)
Erikson Analysis	<b>Crisis</b>	Industry vs Inferiority	Identity vs Confusion	Intimacy vs Isolation	Generativity vs self-absorption	Integrity vs despair
	<b>Good outcome</b>	Ability to learn, understand, & organise	See self as unique and integrated	Ability to love & commit to others	Care and contribute to family and society	Sense of integrity and fulfilment, ready for dying
	<b>Bad outcome</b>	Inferiority in the above tasks	Confused identity	Can't form loving relationships	Concern only for self, feel stagnated	Despair and doubt over dying
Applying Erikson Analysis	<b>Key Ministry needs</b>	Need to know and see God's love through the lives of adult carers	Need for role models and discovery of identity, belonging, and giftings in Christ	Finding help, meaning and belonging in church while managing life transitions	Able to care, lead, and serve the church meaningfully	Finding care and support in aging issues
	<b>Key Ministry Windows</b>	Window for forming faith and habits in relating to God and peers	Window for building conviction, faith and lifelong spiritual friends.	Critical to live out faith in making major decisions. Key life stage that will influence the future of our aging church	Potential for this life stage to provide leadership to all levels of the church	Available and able to contribute and serve with years of accumulated wisdom

# Youth and Young Adult Identity Development

- Erik Erickson wrote that the major crisis of adolescence is **forging an identity** into young adulthood (13 to 30)
- This identity can be expressed in terms of beliefs, values, with focus on career and life-planning
- Identity formation challenges:
  - **Just do it**—settles for something without critical reflection only to change course much later in Midlife
  - **Never grown up**—bounces from job-to-job and postpones thinking through and deciding what to do
  - **Going nowhere**—drifts along aimlessly without a sense of urgency because he/she has yet to be challenged

# Youth and Young Adult Identity Development

- Identity development encompasses more than just what we do
- There are deeper issues, including:
  - how we relate to others and
  - what we come to believe

# Adulthood Identity Development

- The period of Adulthood is centred around the ages of 31 -64
- The period of Midlife can be any number of years as a kind of “half-time” in the game of life
- By age 40, most people have experienced both successes and disappointments
- Midlife is a time for taking stock of where we are heading
- Men, in particular, experience a shift from their earlier dreams of “success” to re-adjusted dreams of “significance”

# Adulthood Identity Development

- We seek clarity on what are the important values to live for
- Words such as relationships, legacy, and contribution become more important than achievements, goals, and success
- Erickson calls the shift as a struggle between “generativity and stagnation”
- For single women, Midlife is a period when they face the end of their child-bearing years and may grieve this loss
- For the career woman, Midlife may signal a change to a more “meaningful” occupation



# Adulthood Identity Development

- In marriages, a subtle reversal may in the focus of each gender
- Men may become more aware of the importance of relationships
- Women may long for a bit more individuality, especially if she has been absorbed in relationships for most of their life
- Midlife means an appraisal of all aspects of our life—work, relationships, physical health and well-being, spiritual life—who am I, what am I living for, and where am I heading?

# Transition into Retirement

- In third or retirement age (65 and above), people have the opportunity to retire, do part-time, or stay in full-time work
- This period can be viewed in negative or overly-optimistic terms, as in the end of their productivity or the holiday they longed for
- The challenge is finding purpose beyond full-time employment to a life that is a mixture of different job opportunities and even informal contributions as a parent, grand-parent, friend or mentor
- Erickson calls this stage “integrity vs despair,” the ability to look back at one’s life with a sense of contentment and face the end of life with a sense of wisdom and no regrets

# Transition into Retirement

- Two different visions of retirement life
- From the secular world, the picture is almost exclusively financial—how much money do you need to achieve financial independence and a life of limitless leisure
- The second perspective is a vision of non-retirement—work until you drop, because work is their identity
- Christians should view work, aging, and even death differently
- We must adapt to the realities of declining strength and gain a heart of wisdom

# Eccl 12:1-7

- Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them”—<sup>2</sup> before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; <sup>3</sup> when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; <sup>4</sup> when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; <sup>5</sup> when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets. <sup>6</sup> Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, <sup>7</sup> and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

# Transition into Retirement

- As we get older, there will be cognitive and biological declines
- We need to shift from long-term planning to prepare for eternal resting
- When Paul was younger, he was a meticulous planner: “After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia” (1 Cor 16:5)
- “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim 4:7-8)

# Christian Vision for Retirement

- Christians should view our life journey as a sequence of chapters
- I've lived through the chapters of youth, early marriage, young parenting, intense career years
- Now, I'm entering the chapter where I can focus on serving my church and discipling younger men
- Paul had a vision for discipleship that extended past Timothy to “reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2)

# Christian Vision for Retirement

- Likewise, Paul urged older women to train younger women:
- “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. <sup>4</sup> Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup> to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (Titus 2:3-5)

# On Finishing Well

- To finish well, we have to begin now
- To finish well, we have to close each chapter before moving on
- To finish well, we need a perspective from the end
- How we finish depends on the relationships we leave behind
- To finish well, we extend and accept unconditional forgiveness
- Finishing well does not mean fulfilling all our desires/goals
- Finishing well means letting go and moving on



# Discussion Questions

- How is your Christian faith different now to 5 years ago? 10 years ago? 20 years ago?
- In what ways are you yourself now different?
- Do you have difficulty accepting people at a different “stage of faith”? Why?
- How can ORPC cultivate stronger connections between people from different life-stages in doing discipleship?

# Books for Reading

- **Life Stages**

- Gail Sheehy, *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life* (Bantam/Dutton, 1974)
- Gail Sheehy, *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time* (Harper Collins, 1995)

- **Faith Stages**

- Alan Jamieson, *Faith Development: Resources for those on the journey*
- This is a good introduction to the subject of faith stages, using a variety of different sources
- James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981)