





I don't know if any of you have ever handled a palm tree ? Over in Florida, we have five tall palm trees at the bottom of our garden.

Pruning them and cutting the branches is so difficult - and bending them to fit into a black bag for the garbage men is even worse. They cut your fingers, they bounce back when you bend

them - they are so strong that even a saw cannot really cut through their fibres. And they are the only ones which can withstand hurricanes. During the last bad hurricane, we lost our huge orange tree and a lemon tree, but the five palm trees stood firm and strong against 200 mph winds !

Living in an over 55 community in Florida for most of the year has taught me a lot about my own approach to life and living. There I live with 70, 80 and 90 year olds - both men and women - who are, like the palm trees so strong.

But their strength lies not in their fitness or in their bodies, but in their spirits. They have an attitude to life which many of us have still to understand and develop - they are so young in spirit. They bear fruit in old age. They have faith and live it every day.

So - how do WE put more life into our years ? Firstly, we should have more enthusiasm for life. When we wake up in the morning, do we say "Good God, it's morning !" or do we say positively to our Lord, "Good morning, God!"

Instead of always moaning and groaning and having a grumble about things - why not react like this man I know so well in Florida ?

Let me introduce you to a 92 year-old, well-poised and proud man, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with his hair fashionably combed and shaved perfectly, even though he is legally blind. He moved to a nursing home last month. His wife of 70 years recently passed away, and that's why he had to move.



After many hours of waiting patiently with him in the lobby of the nursing home, he smiled sweetly when told his room was ready. As he manoeuvred his walker to the elevator, I gave him a visual description of what I could see was a tiny small room. I told him about the colourful curtains which had been hung on his window. "I LOVE it!" he said with the enthusiasm of an eight year old having just been given a new puppy.

"But you haven't seen the room - just wait!"  
"That doesn't have anything to do with it!" he said.  
"Happiness is something you decide ahead of time.  
Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how  
the furniture is arranged. It's how I arrange my mind.  
I have already decided to love it."



It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice : I can spend the day in bed thinking of the difficulties I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful to God for the ones that do.

Each day is a gift from God and, as long as my eyes open, I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away, just for this time in my life. Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you've put in."

So our old man's advice to us would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories and thank God for them all.

In his ten years on the PGA Tour, Paul Azinger, an American golfer, won eleven tournaments, including the 1993 PGA Championship. But after that triumph, the robust golf pro was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments followed, leaving Azinger sometimes vomiting for twenty minutes of every hour of the day.

He said, "Now I know when you're 33 you're not bullet-proof. I'm as vulnerable as the next guy. None of us is promised tomorrow, so we need to live every day to the fullest. My hope and security are in Christ, and today I am grateful for even the smallest blessings - for a roof over my head, for food in my stomach, That I have a sense of smell, that my hair is going to grow back. Those are things I took for granted, but never again."

This is our golfer's advice to us all to help us add life to our years :

Fear less, and hope more ;  
Eat less and chew more.  
Whine less, breathe more.  
Enjoy the light, and live more.  
Fret less, and rest more.  
Hurt less, and exercise more.  
Suffer less, and drink more ;  
Avoid the bad, enjoy life more.  
And always always THANK GOD in all circumstance for  
your life !



In Paul's letter to the church of Rome - the Romans - we read how Paul thinks of how we should lead our lives as Christians. This is what Paul says to us :

*“Do not conform yourselves to the standards of the world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of mind.”*

It's our ATTITUDE to life which makes us what we are. One man gets nothing but discord when he tries to play a piano. Another gets harmony. No one claims that the piano is at fault.

Life is about the same for Christians. The discord is there, but so is the harmony. Study to play it correctly and life will bring forth the beauty in your life. Play it falsely and life will give forth only the ugliness. Life is not at fault - it's us.

Think back for a moment to when we were young. Those were great days ! But are you REALLY older now - or is there still that young spirit inside you ? Nobody grows old by living a certain number of years. People grow old when they desert their ideals. Years wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm for life wrinkles our soul.

Paul then reminds us to use our talents in God's service and this will give us a purpose in life - whether we are good at teaching, speaking, serving people, encouraging people, being generous with our time or with our money, hard workers or kind, encouraging people - we all have different gifts and talents which allow us to put more life into our years when used for the Lord. If we want to be all the best we can be for God, we just can't bury those talents and gifts we have inside us.



A boy stood looking at Holman Hunt's famous picture of Jesus knocking on a door to get in. The boy looked at the picture and said to his father, "Dad, did Jesus get in?" His dad looked a bit puzzled and said, "Well, I don't think he did." The boy said, "Why not? Didn't they hear him knocking at the door?" Dad thought for a moment, "Maybe not", he replied. The boy looked again and his final remark was, "Maybe they were all living down in the cellar."

It may be that some of us are living deep down in the cellar of life. It is high time that we got ourselves out of the spiritual basement! Jesus is coming soon. Sooner than you may think, Jesus will be knocking on your door. Let Him in. Jesus seeks and saves if we will but open the door. But how can we open it if we are living in the cellar of life and not really adding life to our years?

Yesterday I received a letter from a ninety four year old lady in our C 21 Park. Martha has a wonderful joy and approach to life. She is joyful and happy, enjoys our book club and Koffee Klatches, swims, dances every Saturday night and is a faithful attender at church every Sunday morning. Here is a little extract from her letter to me :

*"I will be travelling north soon where it will be cooler - it's a joy to travel. I feel very fortunate at my young age to still be able to travel! I pray to my Lord - without ceasing - for my thousands of blessings! Every day!"*

Isn't that a great letter to get! It is encouraging for us all. So, whether you are seventeen or seventy, nine or ninety, there is inside all of our hearts a person

who loves a new challenge, an appetite for what comes next in life. Don't stay in the cellar - get out and get going !

You are as young as your faith and as old as your doubts.

Life life with challenges and with the fun and excitement of doing your best, giving your best and being the best you can for Christ and you will definitely add life to your years ! "

Let us pray :

Help us to be more enthusiastic Christians. Help us to put more life into our years - to give of our time and talents in your service - to enjoy our lives with fellow Christians - and, Lord, please give us a sense of humour. Give us the grace to see a joke, to get some fun and laughter from life, and pass it on to other folk.

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Putting life into my years in Florida !