



solutions that transform



February 1, 2007

Gleanings

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Over the Hill

“Over the hill” is an expression that is used in corporate America today in reference to workers over fifty—in some cases the line of demarcation is as low as forty. The inference of the expression is that a person who has passed the “magic time mark in life” is out-of-date, irrelevant, and/or unable to keep up. As a result of this perception, we now have age discrimination laws. Notwithstanding the attempts by lawmakers to protect the older crowd, the real question is about the perception—whether it is true or false. Do older workers have a contribution to make?

As a case study, consider Maria Moes. Born in Luxembourg in 1828, she was well educated for a woman of her day. While attending boarding school in Paris, she heard a captivating lecture about the United States.

In 1850, she traveled with her sister to the United States. As she learned English, she developed her teaching skills and began a teaching career. Soon her administrative and leadership skills emerged as she founded schools in several communities in the Midwestern region of the United States.

In 1883, she was director of a private school. The community where she lived was devastated by a tornado. Dozens were killed and hundreds injured. Communication with the small community was cut off and there were no emergency services. The town fathers organized a makeshift effort to treat the injured. Maria and her teachers were part of this effort, which changed Maria’s life and gave her a vision for the need of a local hospital.

The life expectancy in 1883 was approximately sixty-five years. Maria was fifty-five at this time. Arguably, she was “over the hill.” Nevertheless, she had a vision to build a hospital to serve her community, but she had no resources and only a limited knowledge of health care. Against the odds, Maria built the hospital that no one believed she could build. Furthermore, this hospital became a world leader in health care. Doesn’t sound like she was “over the hill,” does it?

What enabled her to achieve such accomplishments during her latter years? May I suggest that she had a biblical view of aging? Rather than viewing aging as a process of becoming irrelevant, she viewed aging as a process of preparation. Her life was characterized by continuous learning and growing in wisdom. (*Wisdom* is defined as “the skill to live life.”)

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My wife is a professional educator who, like Maria, is continuously learning and growing. In her studies, she found research indicating that human physical development is not completed until about age twenty-five. Of course, spiritual, emotional, and mental development never stops short of physical death. It appears that the first twenty-five years of life are spent largely developing physically and the rest of life is spent developing wisdom.

This view is consistent with Jesus's teaching in Luke 19:11 and following, which articulates the principle of promotion based on faithfulness. If we faithfully walk with God and steward what He has given us as we age, we should grow in wisdom and hence become more valuable. Note carefully that the predicate to gaining wisdom is to faithfully walk with God and to steward what we have been given.

Maria Moes was faithful to walk with God and to steward what she was given, including the vision that she gained through the terrible tornado of 1883. Then as a result of stewarding that vision, not only did she fulfill her life purpose, but also you and I have been greatly blessed. You see, Maria's vision to build a hospital led to many advances in medical science that are in use today. In fact, it could be argued that Maria is the "mother" of modern hospital care today.

If you want to read or listen to more about Maria's story, click on the buttons below.

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Maria was an unknown teacher who made her life count. Read and/or listen to Maria's inspiring story.



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