

A Book Review for individual and or small group reflection.

Elder's Rising: The Promise and Peril of Aging by: Roland D. Martinson

By P Wade Brinkopf, Saint Peter Lutheran Church, Shepherding Program

Session 3

In our last session we spoke of the three 'phases' of Elderhood, early, middle, and late. The definition of these phases of life are easily understood as the author describes them. Before we go into those definitions the author offered up a question to all of us on what 'old' is. Martinson prefaced the description of elderhood himself with this research. "In a 2009 Pew study, Americans gave thirteen different responses to the phrase "a person is old when she or he _____". Responses included:

- Turns eighty-five
- Can't live independently
- Can't drive a car
- Turns seventy-five
- Frequently forgets familiar names
- Finds their health is failing
- Has trouble walking up stairs
- Has bladder control problems
- Is no longer sexually active
- Turns sixty-five
- Retires from work
- Has grandchildren
- Has gray hair (Martinson 64)

1. How do you manage these characteristics within yourself?

2. Talk over some positive ways to respond to someone who draws only from the worst aspects of this list of truths?

This list of statements is real. It reflects almost every single one of us to one degree or another. The truth of the matter is this, "this is who I am, this is who we are, and how do we do ministry with this set of circumstances?" I'll conclude this session with this quote, Martinson quotes psychology professor Laura Carstensen who likes the term 'perennials'. She writes, "For one, perennials make clear that we're still here, blossoming again and again. It also suggests a new model of life in which people engage and take breaks, making new starts repeatedly. Perennials aren't guaranteed to blossom year after year, but given proper conditions, good soil and nutrients, they can go on for decades. It's aspirational." (Martinson 65)

1. How can we grow the ministry of our perennials?