

## Getting Older

1. Warm up question: On Sunday we talked about getting older. If you could write your ticket for what you'll be doing when you're 80 years old, what would it be? What do you see yourself doing at age 80?
2. Jeff told about a path that runs along a creek in the woods where he has been walking his dogs for the past 20 years. During the winter, when the forest is bare, you can see the entire path, all the way to where a sign marks the end of the trail. Over the years, Jeff has found himself thinking, "If this trail represents the timeline of my life, where am I on the trail? How far am I, and how much time do I have left?" As the years have passed, Jeff has moved from the halfway mark to the two-thirds mark.
  - a. How about you? How far down the trail are you?
  - b. How do you feel about the fact that you have less time left now than you did ten years ago?
  - c. How do you feel about aging? What do you like least? What do you like best?
3. God could have designed our reality differently. God could have created a world in which we humans were "hatched" fully formed and lived all our days at our physical prime until the time came for us to fall asleep and die. In this design, there would be no seasons of life, no gradual decline, no getting old, no sickness and injury. Would you prefer this design? What would you like about it? What would you dislike?
4. Instead of putting us in a world like the one just described, God (in infinite wisdom) chose to put us in a world where we start small, grow to our prime, then settle into a long 55 year period of gradual decline that we call aging – all of which raises the question: Why? What's the purpose of aging? For guidance, we looked to a famous dialogue between Jesus and Peter. This conversation takes place on a beach after Jesus has risen from the dead. Read John 21:15-19.
5. When we read this conversation between Jesus and Peter, we tend to get so preoccupied with the "do-you-love-me" part that we overlook the critically important words Jesus says next to Peter in verse 18:

"Very truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go."

These words are specific to Peter. During his younger years, Peter was an aggressive, impulsive go-getter with lots of time, energy, options, plans, and possibilities. When Jesus was crucified, Peter wasn't ready to die, so he escaped by denying Jesus three times. But in his old age, life took Peter right back to the place he feared – that place