

**God's Path to GOLDEN SPLENDOR**  
**The High Calling of Aging Well**

**CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1. Not If... But When?</b>	
Embrace Your Life Stage.....	18
<b>2. "The Wolf at the Door"</b>	
Tackle Self-Centeredness.....	23
<b>3. Live Out Your Mission</b>	
Employ Diligent Perseverance.....	32
<b>4. From Honor to Ashes</b>	
Resist Prideful Thinking.....	40
<b>5. He Left His Throne</b>	
Submit to HIS Way.....	48
<b>6. Difficult Days</b>	
Prepare for the Coming Trials.....	61
<b>7. Remember!</b>	
Retain God's Promises and Commands.....	72
<b>8. 180°... 24/7</b>	
Seek God's Power for an Invigorated Life....	81
<b>9. A Fly on the Wall</b>	
Gain Valuable Insights From the Lives of Others..	93
<b>10. "What If..."</b>	
Attain a God-Focused Retirement.....	103
<b>11. "Just Joking!"</b>	
Guard Your Mouth; Keep Your Sense of Humor...	112
<b>12. "Wolf-Eaten" or Spirit Filled</b>	
Outgrow Grumbling and Complaining.....	121
<b>13. Don't Just "Get Through It!"</b>	
Make Every Interaction an Opportunity.....	132
<b>14. "Think Outside the Box"</b>	

	Grow In God's Grace.....	144
15.	<b>Examine Yourself</b> Use God's Score Card.....	159
16.	<b>Foolproof Your Life</b> Saturate Your Mind With God's Word.....	168
17.	<b>Thanksgiving and Praise</b> Achieve a Passionate Prayer Life.....	177
18.	<b>Communicate Masterfully</b> Utilize the Power of God's Loving Spirit.....	189
	<b>Epilogue</b> Hope.....	202
	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	206

## Chapter 2

# The Wolf at the Door

### *Tackle Self-Centeredness*

- heart**, n.- 1.the center of the total personality, especially with reference to intuition, feeling, or emotion.  
2. capacity for sympathy; feeling; affection.  
3. spirit, courage, or enthusiasm.

When I was a tiny child I heard the wonderful, and quite scary, tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. I'm sure you remember it too. Little Red Riding Hood was pictured as a sweet, innocent child braving the unknown dangers of the dark woods to carry a basket full of goodies to her elderly grandmother. As she approached her grandmother's bed she sensed something was wrong. Hoping her grandmother would settle her fears, she asked about all the changes she saw in Granny's appearance. When she started discussing her grandmother's much larger teeth ("Grandma, what large teeth you have!"), the wolf, that had of course just eaten Grandma and was disguised in her bedclothes, seized the moment to devour poor Little Red Riding Hood.

What a premise for a child's story!

I don't know what your parents told you when you woke up screaming because you had just dreamed that the Big Bad Wolf was chasing you around the bedroom trying to gobble you up. My mom and dad comforted me by saying, "It was just a story. There is no such thing as the Big Bad Wolf!"

As I fast forward through my life I've discovered that they were wrong. Through many surveys, research, and personal experience from my life and the lives of my friends, I know that the "Big Bad Wolf" is alive and well!  
(Matthew 7:15-20)

I've heard many stories through the years of modern day Little Red Riding Hoods who have lovingly gone the extra mile to grandmother's house, toting baskets of kindness and hopefully a little joy. But as it so often happens, even with grandparents and parents who claim to know and love the LORD, the "Big Bad Wolf" has swallowed up the images of the sweet, loving grandparent that we've all seen in those wonderful Norman Rockwell paintings.

As Red approaches the bed with her basket of goodies, she realizes this frail person IS the "Big Bad Wolf." For, as she bends to get into Grandma's view, Grandma bites her head off with unkind, unloving and negative words.

"Why don't you ever come to see me?"

"But, Grandma, I'm here now!"

"Don't you know I don't like those cookies?"

"But Grandma, you said you'd rather have these than the ones I brought last time."

"Why are you wearing that hideous red hood? You look like a giant blood clot!"

"But Grandma..."

“Can’t you get a better job? What are you thinking, or are you?”

“Grandma...!”

“When are you going to get married and settle down?”

“I’m praying and waiting for God’s will, Grandma.”

“Whatever! Where are my slippers?”

As Little Red bends to find Grandma’s slippers she thinks to herself: *O Grandma, what a small heart you have! Where are all those convictions you use to have about reaching out to people and showing them the love of God?*

Is this the way we are all destined to end our days on earth? Will we all destroy our testimonies of God’s love in our lives as we endure this last insult to our bodies?

Is old age God’s “final exam” for Christians?

All of life is a continual test (Deuteronomy 8:2). Adam and Eve were the first to have their obedience tested (Genesis 3). God’s tests not only allow us to prove our obedience to His will for us, but also help to magnify His love, strength, power, peace, joy, and faithfulness in our lives.

How could God prove and demonstrate His character to us if we didn’t have a need to be loved, or if our days were constantly filled with sufficient food, satisfaction, and security? Deuteronomy 8:11-20 warns against forgetting God in our daily thoughts. Forgetfulness leads to disobedience. If we never, knowingly, had to depend on God for anything, a sense of self sufficiency could become our stumbling block. Pride would rule our heart, and most likely we would forget that He is the source of everything.

The following illustration of a diamond salesman has always been one of my favorites.

As the salesman tries to promote the beauty of a diamond ring, he could simply open the little white box and let the customer take a peek, or he could find a much better approach to dramatically display its beauty. For example, he could use a black velvet background with a strong overhead light to illuminate and reflect the magnificence and glory of each facet.

The truth has not changed. The quality of the diamond is the same whether it is displayed in the little white box, or on the blackness of the velvet. But the evidence of its beauty is so much clearer, and seemingly magnified, when it is surrounded by blackness.

The same is true with God’s love and power in our lives. He is always with us, but when we start feeling self-sufficient, and we think that our ways are better than His ways, He reminds us of the beauty of His Light by sending the darkness of trials beyond our control. When we turn to Him in these times of weakness and lack of control His mighty character of love and caring is obvious and magnified in our time of need. Stories from the Old Testament clearly show us the results of prideful human nature. God blessed His people over and over again with incredible miracles, and yet they continually turned their backs in disobedience. In His great compassion God sent Moses to save the Israelites from lives of darkness, hardship, and slavery (in Exodus). They complained and wanted to be relieved of their position of servitude. God displayed His power and love for the Israelites on the “black background” of ten devastating plagues on the Egyptian nation that He allowed them to view from afar. They “got it” for a short time, but then when their commitment and love for God was tested in the desert they quickly turned to fearful complaining and distrust. At this point God moved the “black backdrop” of trials and tribulations closer to their own experience. Forty years of wandering aimlessly in the desert would purge the unfaithful generation from among God’s chosen people.

There are a few people in the world (I Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 4:11) who actually learn from the tests, mistakes, and problems that others face. These people are in tune, sensitive,

and learn quickly through the “lessons” that they “experience” from afar; people for whom the Scriptures come alive. They view the tests of others and make application unto themselves. They see the glory of God in everything— from the ants on the kitchen counter to the awesomeness of the heavens (Psalm 8:1-9) on a cold crisp winter night. They are the “Jobs” and “Ruths” of our time. In everything they give thanks; in everything they find meaning and purpose.

These are people who understand what Solomon discovered in Ecclesiastes. God creates us for His own pleasure. We are to love Him with all our heart and to seek only His desire for our life by keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). After years of searching for meaning and discarding every possibility, Solomon finally came to the end of a life filled with God’s blessings and an incredible, unmatched wisdom— he figured it out! God defined the purpose of human life before the beginning of time.

What is more pleasurable and joyful to each of us than to know that another human being loves us with all of his or her whole heart and will bend over backward to show us that love? If we are fortunate, we’ve all had a small glimpse of this human love in our own lifetime. Someone who has the whole world to choose from to love... but chooses to love us!

To have the love of a faithful dog has always been comforting. All you have to do is throw a little food in a bowl and you have a friend for life. But that isn’t the “robot” love for which we were created.

God gave us all the beauty and temptations of His awesome creation, the world. He said, “It’s yours! It is very good!”

His greatest joy is when His carefully created children, who have been given all the choices in the universe, choose to love, adore, trust, and obey the One who has brought them to life. That is our purpose! That is what Solomon, with his entire God-given wisdom, finally discovered. We are here to “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s ALL” (Eccl. 12:13). If we don’t see this as our God given purpose, we have no purpose! “All is vanity!” (Eccl. 12:8)

Many people come to the door of the “Golden Years” looking for what life can give back to them. They’ve worked hard all their lives and now it’s time to let the world honor them. It’s time to find the gold at the end of the rainbow that everyone talks about. They push aside their God-given purpose of praise and obedience, and remind their world that the Bible says to take care of the elderly, the widows, and the fatherless.

It’s always easier to sit in church and give someone else the elbow when the preacher is preaching. But as is true in all of life’s trials, we are to be thankful (I Thes. 5:18), be still (Psalm 46:10), and be obedient (Deu. 13:4) to the Spirit’s leading. Do we want our world to honor us only with their lips, out of duty, or with their hearts, out of truth and love?

While working on this chapter I was “privileged” to witness an exchange between a very duty-bound 60-year-old son and his seemingly needy and frail father. I was sitting with my mother-in-law outside the doctor’s office waiting for our ride to return with the car. I watched the son carefully leave his bent and stone-faced father, slumped down in a wheelchair, to run and get their family car. He spoke clearly into his ear to assure him, and calm his complaining that he would be right back. The father looked dazed and confused. My heart went out to both of them, as the son seemed torn about leaving. I signaled over the father’s head that I would watch him.

The minute his “boy” was out of earshot the old man perked up, got out of his wheelchair, walked to the trash can to dispose of a gum wrapper, and started conversing with everyone around him, smiling and laughing in a very lucid and animated way. As his car inched closer to the pick-up spot, his head quickly dropped, and he went back into his pathetic “victim”

routine. He then made his son struggle to communicate with him about getting into the car, and accused him of taking too long in the parking lot. As the car slowly eased into traffic, he actually turned his head and gave us all a quick wink.

I will never know if the son knew he was being duped, that out of duty he “played the game.” I think of the relationship this man is missing with his son, his God, and probably his entire family. He could have been “walking” toward the sunset in truth, and building an incredible legacy of love that would be an example for generations to come. Unfortunately, he was providing an example; an example of self-centered complaining and an ungrateful heart.

That is our challenge as we face our last days on earth. Will we become self-centered “victims” in this final test, seeking the gold from others, or will we be the GOLD, reflecting God’s love and kindness in self-controlled faithfulness to His will for us?

Will the last day of our life be better than today as we seek to please God? That is my prayer!

*O Father ... keep the wolf far from the doorstep of my heart. Fill me with Your mighty Spirit. I thank You for this precious time of my life. A time when my-world will not see my strengths, for my skills and abilities are waning more everyday. My-world will see Your love and compassion for Your servant. Refine my heart and keep it pure. Let me reflect and magnify Your love and kindness to those around me. Give my-world ears to hear and eyes to see Your character shining through my weakness, for You are the true Gold of not just the “Golden Years,” but every year.*

*Let me one day stand before You and hear You say, “Well done... you allowed my Holy Spirit to control your will and fill your heart with my love, gentleness, kindness and truth.” (Gal. 5:22-25)*

# Claim Your Gold

## Application Guide

### Engrave your heart:

*(Memorize, or simply re-read during the day.)*

*“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” -Galatians 5:22-23 -NIV*

*“If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.*

*Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” -Galatians 5:25-26*

### Refine the gold:

When we hear older relatives disrespect someone with unkind, cruel words we sometimes simply say, “Remind me not to get that way.” That’s a good start, but if we truly want to remember not to fall into negative speech patterns we could re-route our memory to the **positive**. We could rethink the words of the negative person, and come up with a positive way of saying the same or similar words.

For practice, rewrite Wolf-Eaten Grandma’s words from Chapter Two. Speak in *truth*, but with love, kindness, goodness and gentleness, and with the idea of edifying Little Red. Practice this principle whenever you hear negative, unedifying statements. (Don’t be intimidated by the seemingly simplicity of this exercise. It becomes much more difficult as we learn to edit our own negative statements.)

1. WOLF: “*Why don’t you ever come to see me?*”

Positive words:

2. WOLF: “*Don’t you know I don’t like those cookies?*”

Positive words:

3. WOLF: “*Why are you wearing that hideous red hood? You look like a giant blood clot!*”

Positive words:

4. WOLF: “*Can’t you get a better job? What are you thinking— or are you?*”

Positive words:

5. WOLF: “*When are you going to get married and settle down?*”

Positive words:

7. WOLF: “Where are my slippers?”  
Positive words:

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any **offensive** way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.”*  
-Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

**Nuggets of wisdom, promises and praise:**  
(Sing, or simply read as prayerful poetry.)

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord” by Adelaide A Pollard

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after Thy will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.  
Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Search me and try me, Master, today!  
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,  
While in Thy presence humbly I bow.  
Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!  
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!  
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me!