

Abstract

Older women have many strengths which the church must be aware of and utilise. They also have a need to be ministered to and as the world changes, so do both their gifts and their needs. The reason for choosing the ages of 70 and up as being 'older' is that 70 is an age when people are envisaged as entering a new stage in their lives. From 70 upwards, it is more likely that a spouse may die or physical fitness may deteriorate.

This dissertation was written because I believe that older women are not seen as a priority in parishes. Money and resources are being mainly utilised towards ministry to young people. While this is not wrong, it should not happen to the detriment of older people. A large proportion of congregations is comprised of older women and therefore it is important to understand that this large demographic has needs and gifts to offer.

As primary research, seven interviews were conducted. These included three older women from the author's internship parish, who gave valuable insights into the needs and interests and also gifts which these respondents possessed. Also interviewed were ministers whose main focus is older people and the author's internship rector who has a clear insight into ministry to older women. Additionally, the author interviewed the President of an organisation whose membership is comprised of a large proportion of older women.

This document identified biblical role models for older women, illustrating their positive examples, which older women can consider and from which they may take confidence. It discusses the theological concepts of discipleship, feminine spirituality and mothering as a metaphor for God's care in light of this subject.

Finally this study discusses practical suggestions of ways in which the author has found through research that older women are being equipped for active involvement in church and how it has had a positive effect on them.