

The Secrets of Aging
with FAITH and PURPOSE

DO

I

STILL

MATTER?

KIM TAYLOR HENRY

“In Kim Henry’s warm and gracious style, she comes alongside those of us who may think our best years are behind us and says, ‘Wait. You matter, even now and especially now. Your prayers matter. Your talents matter. Your perspective matters.’ What sweet affirmation. What nourishment for the soul. Using Scripture, godly wisdom, quotes from Christian leaders, and heartfelt prayers, Kim takes us on a journey to understand how valuable we truly are. Especially to God. Please read *Do I Still Matter?* and rejoice in this time of your life.”

—**Jeanette Levellie**, author of *Hello, Beautiful!*
Finally Love Yourself Just As You Are

“*Do I Still Matter?* tenderly penetrates the depths of an aging soul with a resounding *Yes!* Just when you thought the world had sidelined you, Kim Henry uses God’s Word to shift your perspective and remind you that with age comes incredible benefits that truly matter to God and His kingdom.”

—**Lisa Martin**, women’s speaker, Lisa Martin Ministries

“‘Do I still matter’ is a question people ask at any age, but especially as we grow older and begin to see ourselves through the lens of a younger generation. While we may feel like we’ve got storehouses full of wisdom and experience as we age, others often view us as outdated and irrelevant. Kim Henry’s book nails this burning question with God’s divine truth and perspective. Her devotional format is a perfect way to receive daily encouragement from the Word. Every chapter is filled with Scripture, prayer, and a secret key to growing older with confidence in the person God made us to be . . . at any age. Enjoy!”

—**Dr. Mary Ann Noack**, pastor of women’s ministries,
River West Church, Lake Oswego, Oregon

“Kim Henry has addressed the unexpected situations we find ourselves in as we grow older. I faced this dilemma at the age of fifty when I was laid off from my job of twenty-five years. After a merger, the layoff wasn’t unexpected, since many others lost their jobs in the takeover too. However, the surprise was that it was difficult to find another job with all my experience. . . . I prayed daily for God to show me where He wanted me. But the months of waiting with no job made me ask God if He was done with me. Was I no longer important? Did I still matter? . . . In this thorough book, the author covers all the thoughts and questions we have as we age, and affirms that God has the answers to all of them. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is facing the challenges of age, and how to handle those challenges in a positive way, the way God would have us do.”

—**Marilyn Turk**, award-winning author of
more than twenty books and novellas

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Introduction

Doubt Creeps In

I didn't want her to believe me.

I had just turned fifty-five years old and was now eligible for an "age fifty-five-plus" discount. I felt certain that when I requested it, the cashier would look aghast and exclaim, "You couldn't possibly be that old! May I see your ID?" But no, she merely said, "Okay, that'll be \$23.15 then."

"Don't you want to see some ID?"

"No." She bagged my purchase. "No one's going to claim to be a senior citizen if they're not."

She had a point there. Still, the experience left my confidence shaken. Was I really a senior citizen? Was this the beginning of the end?

No, but it was a beginning, the beginning of a new chapter in my life, one that was going to take some getting used to.

Fast (startlingly fast) forward. Years have passed, and I look back on that "am I really a senior citizen?" moment and laugh. Fifty-five had felt so old. It now sounds young. Yes, "senior citizen" status took getting used to. I balked and bucked for a while, like a horse getting used to a saddle. And yes, it has been and still is quite a ride. But I'm more comfortable in it now. I no longer bristle at the thought that I don't have the energy level of my children and grandchildren.

I'm (almost) getting used to the fact that my face and body aren't the same as they used to be. I've learned to appreciate and enjoy the wisdom, luxuries of time, and other bonuses being a "senior" brings. My questions of whether I still matter have been answered. I do! And in many ways. Not exactly the same ones as when I was younger, but beautiful, valuable, and significant nonetheless.

The senior chapter in life has two paths from which to choose. Satan's path is wide open and easily accessible. But it is a way of discouragement, sadness, lamenting, and languishing. God's path is one of joy, adventure, and flourishing. Thankfully, as Christians, we can readily walk that path by faith, fulfilling God's purpose for us and discovering the secrets to a life stage of opportunities and delights. The goal is to internalize and live those secrets. Together, let's explore what a gift this chapter of life can be.

—Kim Taylor Henry

The Question Forms

My days are swifter than a runner. . . .

They skim past like boats of papyrus.

Job 9:25–26 NIV

When we're young, we'd like to be older; days fly, years inch along. When we're older, we'd like to be younger; days can seem long, years whiz by. The seemingly slow passage of time we experience as youths eager to grow up topsy-turveys into a rapid blur of passing years.

I'm the baby of our family. I have only one sister. She is nearly seven years older than me. Growing up, she never let me forget it. She flaunted her privileges and perceived wisdom of years. As we got older, the tables turned. I felt no guilt reminding her of her age. My "baby" status became a delight for me. But gradually, insidiously, the signs began. I felt stiff after sitting. My hands resembled my mother's. Was that a new wrinkle in my cheek, or did I just sleep on my face? Why was I yawning by 9:00 p.m.?

"Inside this body there's an eighteen-year-old wondering what in the world happened." That about summed it up. My chronological age and the age I saw myself at were growing further apart. I balked at my newfound understanding of "old people" jokes.

My childhood aims were to please my parents, do well in school, have a successful career and happy marriage, and create a family. As a child, I was the apple of my parents' eyes. When I met my future husband, I was his desire. In my career, my input was valued, sought out. I had three children and was the center of their universe. During my entire life, I had mattered—to my parents, my husband, my children, my job, and more. I'd felt focused, productive, needed, valuable.

Then, bit by bit, my importance diminished. At least, that's how it seemed. My parents went to heaven. School was a distant memory. My career concluded. My marriage lost the passion of youth. Many of my accomplishments were behind me. My children left home to pursue lives of their own. Parents with children looked too young to have them. Their worlds were full speed ahead. The pace of mine had slowed. I'd always felt involved and valued. Suddenly I wasn't so sure. I began to ask God, "Do I still matter?"

Dear God,

Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by time's passage. It rushes by like raging wind. I used to see the age I'm at as old. Now that I'm here, I don't feel old. It's a different view from this perspective. I'm still me, with so much to offer. My fear is that no one will want it. I want to still matter, Lord. I need my life to have purpose. Show me how to remain valuable and vital. It seems like just yesterday I had it all ahead of me. Now much of what I looked forward to is in the past. When I stood at the threshold of my life, I had no knowledge of what it would be like, who I'd become, where I'd live, what I'd do, or with whom I'd do it. Now I know. I've lived it. Looking back, what I see is the major portion of the years I'll have on this earth. Yet with your grace, I have many years to look forward to. Show me I still matter. Amen.

SECRET #1

**God's way opens the door to a new life stage
of opportunities and delights.**

2

My Focus on Others Matters

Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.

Mark 9:35 NIV

“Do I still matter?” is a normal, natural concern. Yet the more attention we give that question, the further we stray from its answer. Asking it is focusing on ourselves rather than on others. The Bible tells us to do the opposite.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. . . . Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:3–4)

|| **Lord, grant that I might not so much seek . . .
to be loved as to love.** PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

If we focus on showing others they matter, we'll find life's greatest blessings, and we'll matter greatly.

No one enjoys someone who's self-absorbed. Self-absorption does not bring happiness. King Solomon had great riches and the ability to pursue whatever he chose. Yet in the book of Ecclesiastes he described life as “meaningless” thirty times in twelve short chapters. Could that have been due, in part, to his self-focus? For in those chapters he used *I*, *me* or *myself* over one hundred times.

The more we concentrate on showing others they matter instead

of worrying whether we do, and the more we give of ourselves to them, the more we will matter.

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. (Luke 6:38)

While the point is not to care about others so they'll care about us, God did plant that bonus in this paradox. Jesus said, "If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it" (Matthew 10:39). If we cling to concern about ourselves, we'll lose the full and abundant life Jesus offers.

Dear God,

Rescue me from worry over whether I matter. Help me end the foolishness of nursing wounds and mulling over others' opinions of me. May I stop thinking about what I'm getting and focus on what I'm giving. Guide me in putting my energy toward showing, by my words and actions, that you and others matter to me. Nudge me to share with others that they matter to you. May my motivation never be what's in it for me but only a desire to live as you've taught, love as you've loved, and serve you by serving others. Instead of asking myself what others are thinking of me, remind me to ask what I'm doing for them. Thank you for the gift that in meeting others' needs, my own needs are often met. Open my eyes to opportunities to serve without a thought to the cost or return. Fill my heart with such devotion to you and such concern for others that there's no room left to be concerned with whether I matter. Amen.

SECRET #2

If I focus on showing others they matter, I'll experience some of life's greatest blessings.

3

What the World Thinks Doesn't Matter

The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.

1 Corinthians 3:19

It's no fun to feel left behind, blending in with the background, fading into unimportance, no longer critical at work, needed by our children, desired by our spouse. Because we live in a youth-enthralled culture, it's an easy, but erroneous, mindset to fall into. Advertising, beauty products, clothing, entertainment, athletics, employment, you name it, all scream "being young is where it's at."

God's Word tells us to not care what the world thinks. "Our purpose is to please God, not people" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). If we find ourselves sliding into a worldly view that youth is better than age, we can, with the apostle Paul, ask, "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?" (Galatians 1:10 NIV).

The world may reject the wisdom God has granted us through our experiences. We may identify with Proverbs 1:23–25:

Come and listen to my counsel. I'll share my heart with you and make you wise. I called you so often, but you wouldn't come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention. You ignored my advice and rejected the correction I offered.

But God values wisdom. He calls those who have gained it "blessed" (3:13 NIV).

Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them. ELIZABETH ELLIOT

God doesn't determine worth by age. He sees in terms of eternity. It's our beliefs, faith, actions, words, and attitudes that matter to him. He "does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV). Do you think he gives any thought to the fact that we're fifty-five, sixty-five, seventy-five or more years old? No, for he assures us "the godly will flourish. . . . Even in old age they will still produce fruit, they will remain vital and green" (Psalm 92:12, 14).

We can't and shouldn't isolate ourselves from the world, but we can live in the world but "not conform to the pattern of this world" (Romans 12:2 NIV). The closer our relationship with God, the more ageless we'll feel, and the more we'll understand we still matter. We can relax and enjoy the gifts this life stage has to offer. Instead of feeling washed out or washed up, we can wash in God's "river of delights" (Psalm 36:8). When we bring to God, rather than to the world, our questions of whether we still have worth, he will answer with a resounding "YES!"

Dear God,

I look to you, not the world, for my answers. Thank you that with you, age doesn't matter. Let it not matter to me either. Take my attention off my age and put it on who I am inside. I give you my heart. Guide me, use me, fill me with joy in you. May I be in this world but not conform to this world. Keep me on guard against the world's influencing me. I want to focus on pleasing you, not the world. Remind me that age measures only my time on this earth, not my worth. Help me to never give undue attention to the number of my years. Amen.

SECRET #3

God doesn't determine worth by age.

4

My Choice of Perspective Matters

*Turn your ears to wisdom, and
concentrate on understanding.*

Proverbs 2:2

How we look at things impacts our life, and how we look at things is a choice. We can elect to (inaccurately) see this life stage as one in which we don't matter, or we can (accurately) see it as one in which we matter, just in different ways than we have before. We can spend our time bemoaning the loss of our former roles, or we can look forward to fresh accomplishments in new roles. We can fruitlessly wish time would stand still, or we can enjoy the ever-changing flow of life as planned by God.

Our perspective can be that this life chapter is one of opportunity as we open our eyes to each day's potential. "This is the day the LORD has made. [I] will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). We have the time now to absorb, to contemplate, to fully engage.

Each of us must take responsibility for our own attitude. If you want today to be a good day, you need to take charge of the way you look at it. JOHN MAXWELL

The perspective we choose will make the difference between our feeling doleful and our feeling soul-full. We can lament gray hair, or we can look on it as the Bible does—"a crown of splendor . . .

attained in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31 NIV). We can fall into a pit of self-pity, or we can realize that all of life is a gift to be fully lived. That is what Jesus wants us to do. He said, “My purpose is to give . . . a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10). And Moses would echo, “Oh, that you would choose life!” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

How we choose to view this life stage is one choice no one and nothing can take from us. Every age can be a joy—if we choose to make it so. We can, through the attitude and perspective we adopt, age well or poorly. We can be joyful or woeful, grateful or grumpy. We can complain about what we don’t have, or focus on what we do have. We can squander our days, or we can savor each one.

Dear God,

As I get older, it’s easy to look at what I no longer have, what I no longer can do, how I no longer look, and what I’ve done wrong. That’s not how I want to live. Open my eyes to what I have, what I can do, what parts of me look especially good, and what I’ve done right.

When I think of youth, I think of verve and vitality. Give me the mindset that I can still have those qualities as I grow older. Maybe not to the same extent or in an identical way, but have them nonetheless. Let me never forget that. Even at those times when my get up and go has gotten up and gone, inspire me to retain a dynamic and eager attitude and a positive perspective. Steer my thoughts to the richness my life has gained through the addition of years. Help me focus on all the joys I can still experience. Help me see myself as vivacious in my own very special way. Amen.

SECRET #4

**I have the power to choose how
I perceive this life stage.**

Fulfilling My Purpose Matters

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Our daughter showed me a video of her bulldog sitting on a sidewalk, watching the traffic and goings-on. Her dog's head moved slowly from side to side while a time-lapse blur of activity swirled around her. That's how I had felt at times, trying to figure out my purpose in this frenetic world. But after prayer and study, I have concluded God gave all of us the same purpose in life and put in us a deep need to fulfill that purpose.

Purpose has been defined as “the reason for which something exists” (Dictionary.com). We exist because of and for God. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He has infinite love he wants to give, so he created us humans to be his children, to love and be loved by him. God's capacity for love is so great that he fashioned us to be “as numerous as the stars in the sky” (Genesis 26:4 NIV).

The point of your life is to point to Him. Whatever you are doing, God wants to be glorified, because this whole thing is His. FRANCIS CHAN

His desire is, and always has been, a close, intimate, forever relationship with his children. In Eden, that relationship was broken. God wants it restored. Revelation 21:3 (NIV) tells us God's unchanging purpose and heart longing: “God's dwelling place is now among

the people. . . . They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” Since God’s holiness and perfection cannot coexist with sinfulness, and man’s sinful nature is a given, God provided a way to come to him—through the cleansing blood of his Son. Jesus confirmed, “No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

God loves all his children, “not wanting anyone to perish” (2 Peter 3:9 NIV)—the fate of those who reject him. With vast patience, God has through the ages chosen humans to help bring all of us into eternal relationship and unity with him. As Christians, we are “a chosen people,” God’s very own possession, “that [we] may declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV), and lead others to him. That is his purpose and his plan. “The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Psalm 33:11 NIV).

Because we are God’s children, he also desires joy for us, and a “rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10), just as we desire for our children. Through Jesus and his Word, God shows us how to live in a way that will bring us those gifts. “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace” (Isaiah 55:11–12 NIV).

Our purpose is to help accomplish God’s purpose, plan, and desire for us, his children: to have a close relationship with him now, a rich and satisfying life filled with joy, bring others to know him, and live with him forever. If we follow Jesus; have a love relationship with God; live fully, gratefully, and joyfully in a way that brings him praise and honor and glory; and do what we can to lead others to Jesus, we are fulfilling our purpose. “Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). There is no way we can matter more.

Dear God,

May I never forget my purpose is to love you and live as you would have me live, bringing you honor and praise and glory, so others will

know you too. Thank you that when I obey and follow you, you gift me with life in all its beauty, wonder, and joy, now and forever. You have planned it all so perfectly! No matter how I choose to spend my days, may my every thought, word, and action be honoring to you. Amen.

SECRET #5

**When my words and actions bring glory to God,
I have the joy of fulfilling my purpose in life.**

My Prayers Matter

*Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:17–18

One of the beauties of prayer is that it can be done anywhere, anytime, under any conditions. We'll never be too old to pray. Even physically limited, we can pray. And when we do, we matter greatly. "We are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him" (1 John 5:14). And the more we converse with God, the closer to him we become. We're pleasing God by spending time and talking with him. We're helping others because God answers every prayer, even if not in the specific way we ask.

**A praying saint performs far more havoc among
the unseen forces of darkness than we have
the slightest notion of.** OSWALD CHAMBERS

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8–9)

When should we pray? What and whom should we pray for? The answer is, anytime, anything, and anyone God puts on our hearts. Sometimes people request our prayers. Other times we pray without

being asked. Sometimes we pray for those we know, other times for people we've never met. We don't always learn the outcome. That doesn't matter. There's not a wrong subject, time, or place to talk with God. "In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6 NIV).

Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life. ISAIAH 55:3

Let's remember too that prayers are best as two-way communications. I treasure my morning quiet time with God. Yet recently I felt it was missing something. When I asked God what it was, I heard in my heart, "Listen." I realized then that my quiet time had become primarily a time of supplication. So I decided to spend at least ten minutes each morning just sitting and listening for God. When I did, he brought me such amazing insights that my listening time quickly expanded. Now I find myself listening far more than making requests. I talk *with* God, not just to him. Our morning time has become a beautiful gift of conversation and learning God's will. "He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed" (Isaiah 50:4 NIV).

With no limit as to what and about whom we can pray, it's a sure way to matter.

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of being able to talk with you any time, any place, about anything. Remind me to not just ask but also listen to whatever you want to bring to my heart. Thank you for the wisdom and guidance you so faithfully give. Thank you also that through the power of prayer I can help move life's mountains. In this new chapter of life, may I stay continually connected to you through prayer. Open my eyes, ears, and mind to awareness of those who need prayer. Thank you for the opportunity to help by lifting them up to you, and for the comfort of knowing that when I do, you will

answer with the right answer at the right time. What a gift that through my prayers I grow closer to you as well. Amen.

SECRET #6

My prayers are important and powerful.



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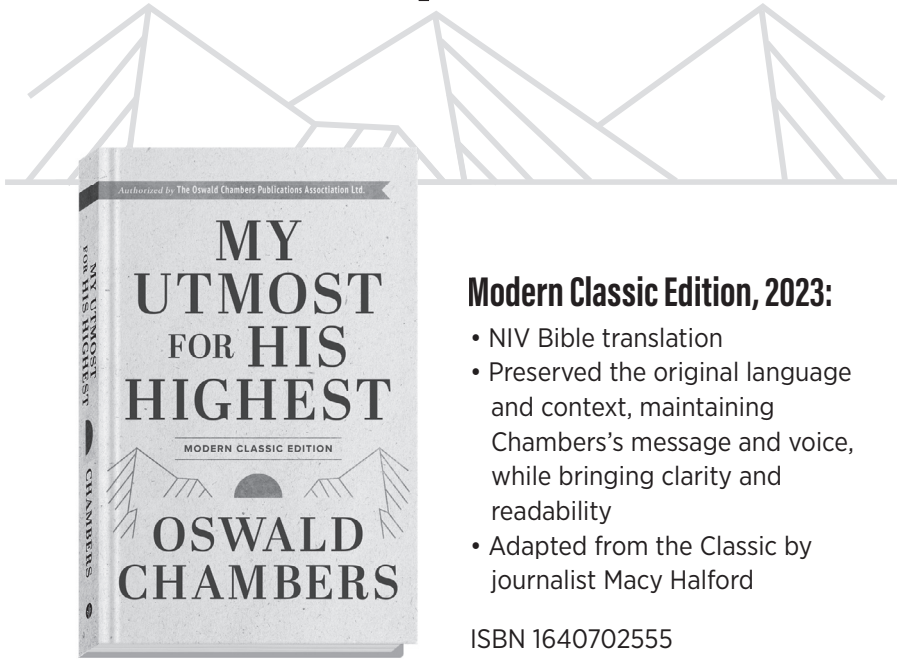


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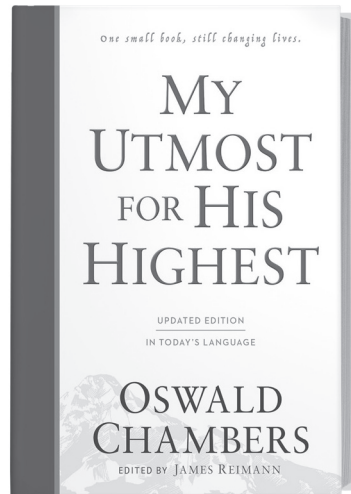
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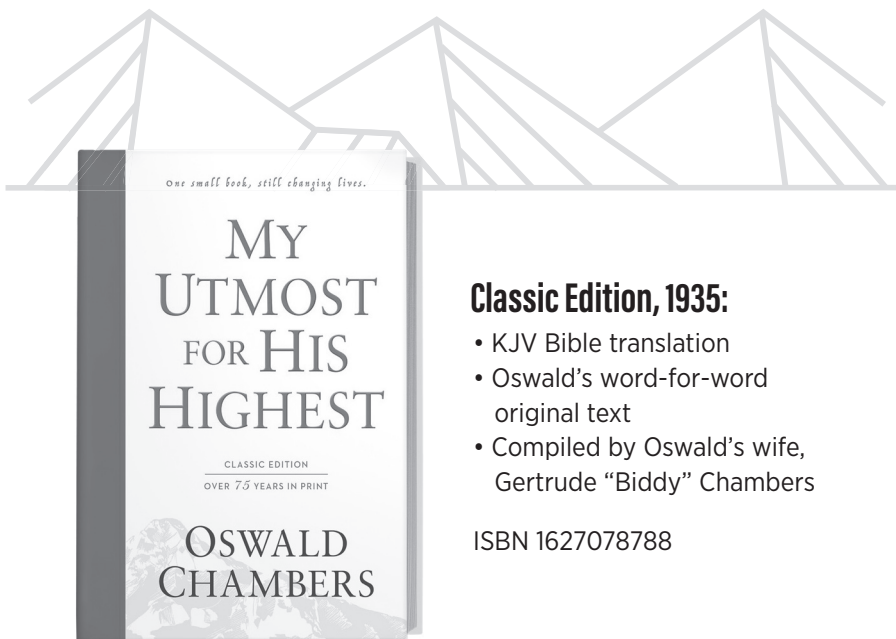
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DO I STILL MATTER?

It's a question that plagues many of us at that awkward in-between age. You're too old to be called middle-aged—after all, how many people really live to be 110? But definitely too young to be elderly! Your roles, your body, and your life are changing. While that's nothing new, now you're less confident about your goals, your purpose, or your value. You're asking the question and you want an answer: *Do I still matter?*

Kim Taylor Henry has experienced the fears, doubts, and insecurities that creep in as the years progress. And in forty daily readings, she offers biblical insights and practical pointers for dealing with the challenges that accompany aging. From the monumental (*Who am I now?*) to the mundane (*My hands look so old!*), Kim confronts the universal concerns of senior adulthood with a reliance upon God.

Find encouragement, community, and inspiration for living confidently and purposefully, in this decade and beyond!

KIM TAYLOR HENRY is a retired litigation attorney turned author. Her first book, *Making God Smile*, was published in 2018. Since 2015, she's written for the annual devotional *Daily Guideposts* (now *Walking in Grace*) and multiple other *Guideposts* books. Mother of three, grandmother of eight, she lives with her husband in Colorado.



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