

## ***Rights and Responsibilities***

The sermon in my church last Sunday was centered upon the concept of Rights and Responsibilities. My pastor expressed concern that we're good at demanding our rights and being aware of what we're entitled to, but not necessarily understanding or accepting the responsibility that may come with it. You see people marching for their "rights", but you don't see people marching for their responsibilities.

As I listened to his message I couldn't help but think about the seniors I work with every day. They've lived through so many life changes in their 70, 80 or 90+ years, and have literally seen their rights change in their life time. Based upon their experiences, and the dramatic transformation in our society they've been front and center for, they have a unique perspective. Then I asked myself, what responsibility do they have to share the lessons they've learned with those younger than them who could benefit from their personal history lesson?

When I think back on my high school history class, and I admit I'm taxing the very depths of my recollection, I was taught about the wars and the purpose of fighting them. I was asked to remember important historical dates and facts. And we studied the impact some of our country's presidents had on changing society and the course of this country. But what I don't remember ever discussing is how individual citizens were impacted by actions and decisions of our leaders. I don't

recall discussing how families put food on the table in the midst of the depression, an experience many of our current seniors were a part of. At what age were children expected to contribute to the financial wellbeing, even survival of the family? Were they lavished with expensive gifts on their birthday or were they thrilled with some new socks, clothes and a little candy?

We should be treasuring the older adults in our society. We should be hungry for their stories and the sharing of their lessons learned. But seniors should feel the responsibility to pay forward their wisdom, to educate future generations on the pitfalls they've maneuvered.

This isn't a lecture, it's a sharing of stories and connecting the dots of a full life lived. And if you are the loved one of an older adult and they are interested in sharing, I sure hope you listen. I was very close to my grandmother, who passed away at 103 many years ago. We had fun, we laughed a lot, but I never took the time to sit with her and soak up her life. It's a regret I'll always have. The gift of knowing Anna on a deeper level is no longer possible for me. We are only promised today. Don't waste it.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by  
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