

## **Bible and the Headlines: Mattering Matters**

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Arthritis, loneliness, and poverty—these are just three of the fears that people must contend with as they become senior citizens. The headlines have added another specter to the aging horizon—mattering. This gerund of ‘matter’ is defined as “To be of importance; to have significance.” The news is that ‘mattering’ really matters, regardless of age.

All the way back on July 8th, Forbes carried, “Mattering: It’s Good For Business And For Every Relationship.” The article is a review of Dr. Zach Mercurio’s book, ‘The Power of Mattering: How Leaders Can Create a Culture of Significance.’ Mercurio believes most supervisors are unaware of this aspect of leadership. In the book, he “. . . reveals how a hidden epidemic of insignificance is quietly eroding engagement, trust, and performance in organizations.” His Rx is to develop a work environment where employees feel validated by their boss and co-workers.

The January 12th edition of the UC Berkeley-based Greater Good Magazine featured, “The Hidden Power of Mattering to Others—And to Yourself.” This piece was also a book review, but of Jennifer Breheny Wallace’s new book, “Mattering: The Secret to a Life of Deep Connection and Purpose.” Wallace believes people have an innate need to be esteemed by others, “The rise in loneliness, burnout, and anxiety is the predictable consequence of a society that has forgotten how to make people feel valued.” The cure for this malady is for each of us to tell the people in our life how much they matter.

Another article inspired by Wallace’s book was the Wall Street Journal’s January 16th piece, “The Retirement Crisis No One Warns You About: Mattering.” The article recounts the travails of formerly high powered professionals to contribute to their community after retirement. The author of the article concluded, “The people who regained that sense of being needed tended to follow a simple, repeatable pattern: They identified a genuine need and met it with 3Ts—time, talent or treasure.” The investment of these resources by the retirees showed the recipients that they mattered too.

There are senior citizens who mattered in the Bible. As a young man, Daniel was the most important advisor to the king of Babylon (Dan 2:48). Over time and the changes in government, Daniel was forgotten and relegated to retirement. When a new king had a crisis, Daniel mattered again. The king was told, “There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father, he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods” (Dan 5:11). The remaining seven chapters of the book of Daniel are proof the prophet still had much to contribute.

Simeon and Anna were two senior citizens who mattered in Jesus’ life. For Simeon, “It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah” (Luk 2:26). His prophecy over Jesus (Luk 2:29-32) has become part of Church liturgy. About Anna, the Bible says, “She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years . . . then was a widow until she was eighty-four (Luk 2:36-37). Anna was valuable to those who were waiting for Jerusalem to be redeemed (Luk 2:38).

There is no mattering crisis in the Bible. We can know our value to God by this one sign: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).