

Conversation **STARTERS**

*for Christians talking
about old age*



Help with starting tough
conversations with parents, older
relatives, friends, and church family



Conversation STARTERS

*“Teach us to number
our days, that we may
gain a heart of wisdom.”*

Psalm 90:12

Talking about later life with an older loved one isn't always easy, and it can be hard to know where to start. Here are seven questions to help you and the older people in your life begin those conversations with compassion, grace, and hope.

Planning for later life isn't about fear – it's about faithful stewardship of all God has given us: **our time, relationships, and opportunities to bless others.**



Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Help our conversations to be of You, full of patience and peace. Help us to be quick to listen and slow to speak, and show us Your way for this season of life.

Amen



1 How have you seen God at work in your life, and how is He working now?

It helps to start by remembering the ways God has led and guided us and our loved ones throughout the different seasons of life. It reminds us that God is steadfast and constant even when we and the world around us are changing.



Why this matters: it helps everyone see later life not as “winding down,” but as a new season of purpose and fruitfulness.

Listen carefully and be open to hearing unexpected things from your loved one. Help them to reflect on how God has guided and shaped their journey so far and what He might be preparing them for next.

2 What gives you joy and meaning day to day?

This question starts to get to the heart of what gives the older person purpose, something which is so important that they keep hold of as they get older. Whether it's prayer, volunteering, time with family, music, or nature – identifying what brings life helps shape future plans that preserve those gifts.



Why this matters: keeps the focus on living fully and faithfully, not just managing needs.

It might be that the older person is already struggling to find purpose in life, so consider changing the question to ask what used to bring them joy and meaning as this might help identify things that could help them now.

3 How can we make sure your faith continues to be nurtured and supported?

There is no age limit on a living relationship with God and older people can expect to keep growing closer to God regardless of changes in the way they are now living life. Discuss church involvement, devotional habits, or how they'd like others to support their spiritual life if their circumstances change.



Why this matters: spiritual care is as vital as physical care and it's something we can plan for.

If they are finding the things they used to do harder now (for example, church feeling unfamiliar and more raucous than it used to be), talk about thinking through alternatives or help them find ways to enjoy things they used to, such as a CD of hymns, or Spotify or YouTube playlists if they are able to get online.

4 What practical plans or wishes would give you peace of mind?

Some people find making plans for the future quite straightforward, others find the complexities and uncertainties harder to prepare for. Talk about their hopes for the future – from where they'd like to live, to care preferences, to how they'd like others to make decisions if needed.



Why this matters: transparency helps avoid anxiety later and ensures your wishes are understood and respected.

If their hopes feel hard for you to accept (such as a desire to move in with you when they can't live at home!), try to dig into why that's what they want. If you can get to the root of their thinking, such as a fear that they'll be forgotten if a care home is best, you can begin to reassure them that that won't be the case.

5 What does 'home' mean to you now?

All of us often default to thinking that home is a building but the old adage that 'home is where the heart is' really is true. Try to help your loved one or older friend to reflect on what makes their physical dwelling their 'home' and how this might not be lost if they had to leave it. Is home about location, people, community, or a sense of belonging?



Why this matters: this conversation can help families consider housing or care options that reflect deep values, not just logistics.

If 'home' hasn't been a happy place for your older person, try and find out from them what they would want it to be in their later years. Help them to think through whether they have an opportunity to create something new and special in this next season.

6 How can we make sure your legacy – faith, values, memories – is passed on?

We all want to be remembered, and this is a good way to find out what's important to your older person in terms of what they value and want to see passed on. Talk about what stories, Scripture verses, or family traditions they'd like to be remembered by.



Why this matters: legacy is about more than finances - it's about passing on faith and love to the next generation.

Some people don't want to talk much about their legacy, sometimes through fear of being gone or a sense of humility. You might want to have a few things to mention that will be their legacy to you – something you remember them saying, something you admire about the way they live their life, a shared memory that you treasure.

7 What are you praying for in this next chapter?

This is a great way to get a sense of what's really at the heart of the way they are thinking about the future. If they are praying for opportunities and guidance, this likely means they have a positive mindset. If they are primarily praying for protection against ill-health or having to make big changes, this may indicate a lot of fear about what's next.



Why this matters: It transforms practical planning into a moment of shared faith and trust in God's continuing goodness.

Share in their hopes, fears, and prayers for the future. Don't dismiss or minimise their answers but make a note and promise to pray for those things as well. If possible or appropriate, pray together with them before you finish the conversation.

Some things to remember

These are big things to be talking about, especially for your older person. If the conversation begins to feel like it's not going well, don't persist but bring it naturally to an end and see if there's another opportunity on another day to pick it back up.

Try not to offer too many of your own opinions about what should happen and when. Make sure that your older person has the time to talk as they need and that they feel confident that you are listening to them and willing to be guided by them.

Don't forget to pray before these conversations and to keep praying after them. If you think things will be particularly difficult, ask other family, friends or church family to be praying for you and your older person.

About Pilgrims' Friend Society

Rooted in our Christian faith, at Pilgrims' Friend Society, as well as providing secure comfortable homes and professional care, we believe that older people can be supported and encouraged to spend the later part of their lives contributing to the world around them, growing and enjoying fulfilling lives.

We have been supporting older people to flourish for more than 200 years, since a group of Christians concerned about "the aged and infirm Christian poor" established the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society in 1807. We started off by providing pensions and support through volunteer visits before developing housing and care schemes for older Christians.

Today we continue that legacy by running residential care homes and independent living housing schemes around the UK, providing environments in which older people are comfortable and secure, whether they need care or are living independently.

The Pilgrims' Friend Society bespoke approach to care, The Way We Care, ensures that we create communities where older people can flourish in their later years, especially as their physical needs increase.

We are committed to seeing the whole person – the history, the experiences, the joys and the sorrows of life, and to knowing who the important people are who make up the bundle of each person's living.

The Way We Care is grounded in our Christian faith and draws inspiration from the Bible. Every part of what The Way We Care looks like in the daily lives of our care homes is rooted in how the Bible tells us to treat and support others around us.

Find out more about The Way We Care by visiting www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/thewaywecare or by scanning the QR code



Our HOMES and HOUSING



Residential care homes

BETHANY HOUSE, PRESTON

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BRIDGEMEAD, BATH

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EMMAUS HOUSE, HARROGATE

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EVINGTON HOME, LEICESTER

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FINBOROUGH COURT, GREAT FINBOROUGH

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FRAMLAND, WANTAGE

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FURZE HILL HOUSE, NORTH WALSHAM

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KOINONIA CHRISTIAN CARE HOME, WORTHING

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Independent living housing schemes

CAREY GARDENS, KIRBY MUXLOE

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DOROTHEA COURT, BEDFORD

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FINBOROUGH COURT HOUSING, GREAT FINBOROUGH

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MILWARD HOUSE HOUSING, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

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Visit our website to find out more about how Pilgrims' Friend Society's Christian care home and housing schemes are supporting older people to flourish in later life.



“Even to your old age and grey hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you.”

Isaiah 46:4



www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

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