

Add Years to Your Life and Life to Your Years

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I've always been amazed at the discoveries that science has come up with to add years and vitality to the life we live -- things that have already had given to us in the Scriptures. For instance, in Hebrews 13, it talks about letting mutual love continue. We are to keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Research has revealed that close relationships help extend our lives. Studies have shown that men who kiss their wives every day live five years longer than men who don't. Good relationships are high-touch. The healing power of touch is already being written about and studied in journals. Science has shown that we need the equivalent of 17 affirming touches a day in order to thrive -- and our world around us is starving. Let mutual love continue. In the name of God, let's help each other thrive by making sure that we share at least 17 affirming hugs or touches each day ourselves.

Also, pet your pets. Pet all your loved ones -- your spouse, your children, your grandchildren, your animals. Petting animals and loved ones lowers blood pressure.

In addition to reaching out and touching someone, be hospitable to the "strange" and "stranger" in your life. Studies have shown that variety does add spice to life. Use as your motto Isaiah 42:16 -- "Along unfamiliar paths I will guide them." Try some new food. Take a new route to work. Try a new book of the Bible. Break your daily routine in some small way. Do something wild. Just let go and let God.

Remember what God told Moses? "Take off your shoes," God instructed. "The place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Try taking off your shoes the first chance you get.

A study reported a number of years ago in USA Today revealed that those individuals who habitually kick off their shoes under the dining table or their desk or their pew tend to live three years longer than the average American.

In the Benedictine Monastic Order, the monks take off their shoes constantly -- for meals, for prayer, for conversation, for reading -- i.e., whenever shoes are not an absolute necessity, they go barefooted. Why? Bare feet are aware feet: aware of the earth, aware of holiness, aware of life. Feet that are bound for too long begin to stink. Souls that are bound up and cooped up for too long begin to stink as well. Let some fresh air into your soul. Go barefoot.

And don't forget to laugh a lot. A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. (Proverbs 17:22) Take a break and do something silly. There's holiness in humor. It helps keep us from taking life too seriously. Recent studies have shown that over fifty percent of all illnesses are stress related. Laughter really is good medicine -- especially when stress is concerned. The joy of the Lord is our strength. So, don't worry, be happy. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Do these things, and you will find that you will not only add years to your life, but you will add life to your years.