

BY KENNETH COPELAND



Get a FRESH Spark

I plan to die young. At a very old age.

Or, to put it more accurately (since, as a believer, I've already done all the dying I'm ever going to do) I plan to depart this earth and go to heaven as a very youthful old man. :: Spiritually, I have the DNA to do it. So do you and every other born-again child of God. As people of faith, we all have great spiritual genes. If you need evidence, just take a look at Abraham. He lived to be 175. According to Romans 4:11, he's "the father of all them that believe." So longevity runs in our spiritual family.



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65 or 70 years old.**

No born-again, faith-walking believer should ever think about quitting! We should think about getting *more BLESSED.*

It's not the kind of longevity that just involves a lot of years, either. It's not the kind that leaves you weak, worn out and sitting in a nursing home. No, it's the kind that comes from having your youth renewed like the eagle's.

That's what happened to Abraham. At somewhere around 100 years old, he got a new lease on life. His old body that had aged to the point where it was reproductively dead, got a fresh spark. The same thing happened to his wife, Sarah. At 90, she started coming alive as never before. So at an age most people consider ancient, Abraham and Sarah started over. They stepped into the fulfillment of God's promise and had a baby.

Think of it! Those are the spiritual genes we inherited when we received Jesus as Lord and God grafted us into the family of faith! We're born again into a lineage of folks who were famous for living vibrantly on earth for a long, long time. We know we have their spiritual DNA because the Bible says, "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:9, 29).

I have made a quality decision to lay claim to that heritage. I'm following the example of Abraham knowing that, because I have the same covenant of BLESSING, if I do what he did I'll get the same results.

Not that Gloria and I want any more babies at this point. That was Abraham's dream, not ours. We're more interested in bearing fruit for Jesus. We want to be preaching His Word and giving Him glory on earth for decades to come. We may not want to hang around here 175 years. But we seriously believe the 120 years mentioned in Genesis 6:3.

Granted, hitting that mark isn't easy. There are some enemies arrayed against us. To defeat them we'll have to fight the good fight of faith.

Beware the Generational Curve

One enemy I encountered a few years ago is what I call the *generational curve*. That's an influence passed down through our natural parents and grandparents. In my life, that curve came through the Indian bloodline that runs through my mother's relatives. Physically, and in the way I think, I take after her side of the family.

Gloria once told me that the older I get, the more Indian I become. In some ways that's fine with me. There's a lot I appreciate about my natural Indian heritage. But there's also something I've had to guard against: People on that side of my family start going downhill at about 70 years old.

Take my grandfather, for example. A strong, hardy man all his life, he hit his late 60s and began slowing down for no apparent reason. When he turned 70, he retired, sold the north Texas farmland that had been his home for years, and moved to town. Problem was, he didn't really belong there.

He wasn't a town kind of man. So from that point on, he kept getting weaker and sicker.

He was eventually diagnosed with cancer. My mother prayed and filled his household with the Word of God until he was healed. But, even so, he continued to decline.

One day, he announced to his wife, Pearl, that they were going on a trip—something they'd rarely done. For a few weeks they traveled around visiting each of my grandfather's family members. Then they spent some time with his youngest sister who lived in Lubbock, Texas.

They were all watching television in the living room one evening when my grandfather got up and headed for the bedroom. "Pearl, don't come to bed until the TV goes off," he said. (That was back when the networks signed off at midnight.)

"OK," she said, "but why?"

"Just don't," he answered.

After midnight, she went into the bedroom and found him lying on the bed with his hands folded across his chest...gone. Sickness didn't kill him. He'd just taken leave of this life the Indian way. When they decide it's time to die, they just go somewhere, lie down and die.

My mother's life followed generally the same pattern. She lived just about the same number of years that he did. I won't take time to tell the story here but, suffice it to say, it's a miracle she lived that long. Doctors had been telling her she was going to die ever since she was a teenager. But she kept believing God for 10 more years until she hit 70.

Because of the death sentence hanging over her, she always pushed herself too hard. She wanted to get as much done for God as she could in the few years she might have left. She meant well, but that's unscriptural. God gave us the responsibility of taking care of our bodies. That means we have to rest.

My mother didn't do it. She spent her nights up praying for family members to get saved. One time I asked my dad, "Doesn't she ever sleep?"

"She doesn't even wrinkle the sheets," he answered.

The year my mother died, I was sitting beside her hospital bed late one night praying for her to receive healing. I'd just read Psalm 103:2-3: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," when all of a sudden, the word of the Lord came to me.

Your mother doesn't need healing. He said.

I was so startled, I jumped. "Well, You could have fooled me!" I answered. "Look at her! She's lying there almost dead. How can You say she doesn't need healing?"

After reminding me of how quickly she'd gotten healed of the pneumonia she'd had a few days earlier, He said, *Her body parts are worn out. What she needs is not healing but the covenant benefit in Psalm 103:5.*

I looked down at my open Bible and read it. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

What the Lord told me next changed the course of my life.

Youth renewal is included in THE BLESSING of Abraham that's yours in Christ Jesus, He said. *If your mother had laid claim to that benefit and declared it over her life every day, things would have turned out differently for her. She didn't know she should do that. But you do! You ought to say every single day, "I receive the benefit of my youth being renewed today!"*

That was in 1988, and I've been claiming youth renewal ever since.

Going Downhill Fast

Thank God I did, too. Because about 20 years later, the devil snuck up on me through that generational curve. A few years before I was about to turn 70, I started wanting to quit. I'd look at my preaching schedule and think, *I've been at this 40 years now. I ought to just get in my bass boat and head up the creek. I ought to relax, retire and get ready to die.*

Let me tell you right now that no born-again, faith-walking believer should ever think about quitting! We should think about getting *more* BLESSED. We should be growing and increasing in THE BLESSING, expanding its reach everywhere we go. We don't have any business retiring from God's service at 65 or 70 years old. We ought to give Him at least 100 years to BLESS the world through us.

That's the scriptural way of thinking. But it's not the way I was thinking back then. I was giving in to other ideas. After a while, those ideas made their way into my mouth. I'd find myself grumbling about how tired I was or some such thing. Meanwhile, I found out my physical body had been affected. I went to the doctor with pain like I'd never experienced in my life. He diagnosed it as degenerative joint disease. The MRI he took of my spine showed one of the disks had ruptured, and a piece of it had worked its way into the nerve canal of the spine. Every time I moved, or even breathed, it would put pressure on the nerves.

Oh, man, talk about hurting! I've been shot. I've been kicked by mules. I've been in car wrecks. But none of it compared to that pain.

As if that wasn't enough, the doctor did a full physical on me and found out my adrenalin glands had just flat lined. I had no strength. I'd get in The Word and the anointing would come on me and I'd do what I was called to do. But when I finished ministering and the anointing lifted, I'd almost fall on the floor.

So it wasn't just my mind wanting to quit. My body wanted to quit, too. I was going downhill fast, and the devil thought he had me beaten. He figured that before long I'd exit planet earth the same way others in my family did. Finally out of his way, I'd just be another dead Indian.

But there was something the devil didn't consider: Psalm 103:5—THE BLESSING of youth renewal I'd been claiming by faith ever since 1988.

For a while there, under the pressure of that generational curve, I almost let it get away from me. But, as always, the Lord was faithful to help me get back on track. The moment it happened I was standing on my treadmill, hanging on to keep myself upright in spite of the pain and fatigue. "Lord, how long do I have to put up with this?" I cried.

His answer came back and slapped me right in the face. *You're not giving Me anything to work with!* He said. *You're crying out from the weakness. You're crying out with the pain. I am the High Priest over your confession of My Word. Declare The Word! Give Me something to work with!*

Acting Like Abraham

From that moment on, I got back on The Word of God. I did the same thing about my physical body that my forefather, Abraham, did.

What, exactly, did he do?

The Bible says "he believed" and acted like "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:17, 19-21).

Instead of complaining about the symptoms, I started saying, "Every sickness and disease is under the curse of the law. I'm redeemed from the curse. Therefore, I'm redeemed from degenerative joint disease. Jesus bore my weaknesses and pains, and by His stripes I was healed. I consider not the pain in my body, but only The Word of God. I am fully persuaded that His Word is true and the work has been done" (Deuteronomy 28:61; Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24).

Someone might ask, "Did you feel anything when you said that, Brother Copeland?"

Yeah. I felt pain—and lots of it! Some nights I hurt so much, I'd sit out on the back porch with heating pads wrapped around me just waiting for the sun to come up. But I didn't sit there complaining about how I felt. I didn't spend my time thinking, *Oh dear God, I have an incurable disease! I hope my elbows don't fall off! I wonder when my knees are going to go? Will I have to have a hip replacement?*

I was tempted with those thoughts but I refused to entertain them. Instead, I got a list of healing scriptures and read them out loud. Over and over and over again.

Then, just like Abraham, I started giving glory to God. I determined to be grateful and give Him thanks by faith. It occurred to me, for instance, that even though some parts of my body hurt, others didn't. So I'd thank Him for that.

I thanked Him that I was saved and going to heaven instead of hell. I thanked Him for my children who are all serving Him. I thanked Him for all kinds of other blessings He's given me. After a while I noticed that I'd tapped into something supernatural. As long as I was shouting my gratitude to God, I wasn't hurting. So I just kept it up.

Somewhere along the way, my physical body started changing. I don't know exactly when. But I can tell you this: Sixteen months after that first MRI, I went back to the doctor for another one. It showed the ruptured disk completely restored. All the other herniated disks were normal again. All signs of degenerative joint disease had vanished.

Today, I am 75 years old and instead of slowing down, I'm gearing up. Instead of getting weaker, I'm getting stronger. I'm living proof that Romans 8:11 is true: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

My physical body has been quickened by the resurrection power of God! Not only have

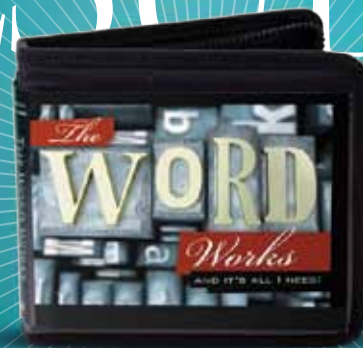
I been healed from the disease that tried to destroy me, my adrenal glands are functioning. My thyroid has come back to life. I'm more alive in every way than I was 15 years ago!

These days when I'm on the treadmill, I'm not crying out in pain and fatigue. I'm enjoying the fellowship of my Father and declaring His praises. I have a fresh spark. I'm enjoying a whole new fruit-bearing season of life, and I intend to live it to the fullest until Jesus and I are both satisfied.

Then, and only then, I'll depart this planet like Abraham did. "He died at a good (ample, full) old age, an old man, satisfied and satiated, and was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:8, *The Amplified Bible*).

The way I see it, that's the only way to go. **VICTORY**

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