

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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A Night to Remember

Senior Takes Great-Grandmother to Prom

By Paul Asay

What Happened

The senior prom welcomed a senior citizen at Ohio's Parkway High School recently. Austin Dennison took his 89-year-old great-grandmother, Delores, to the prom.

Delores wasn't sure she'd go at first. It had been seven decades since Delores had attended high school, and she felt that Austin might rather take someone closer to his own age. After all, she's had a stroke and a heart attack. She'd not be the most energetic dancer. "Are you sure you wouldn't like to take one of the young ladies who could get out there and do everything with you?" she asked.

Yet Austin, a volunteer fireman and Eagle Scout, really wanted Delores (whom he calls "Great-Granny D.D.") to experience prom. She never was able to go herself when she was a girl. As far as Austin was concerned, the date was long overdue.

"I've been blessed with grandparents and great-grandparents who know as much as they do," Austin told Parkway's *Time Bulletin* newspaper. "They have so many stories to tell." Now Delores has one more story. They posed for prom photos. The high school applauded their arrival as Delores whacked balloons with her cane, and they slow danced to the Frank Sinatra standard "Dolores," which Delores' husband used to sing to her.

The couple returned home by 9 p.m., "later than I go to bed these days," Delores admitted; but she had a great time, and so did Austin. "I feel stupendous," he said. "When you help others, in some way you help yourself. She means so much to us. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat."

Talk About It

You don't need to take your grandparents or great-grandparents to prom to show them you care. There are lots of other ways to show your appreciation. This summer, is there a special gift you could give the elderly people in your life? Could you do some yardwork for them? Watch their favorite television show with them? Cook them a special dinner? If they live far away, could you send them a handwritten letter or communicate with them via Skype?

It's not just grandparents or great-grandparents who could use a little extra TLC, of course. There might be some elderly folks in your own church or community who could use a helping hand. Can you think of someone in your congregation you could help? Is there a senior center you and your friends could visit?

Austin marveled at how much Delores knows and how much history she's experienced. She's not alone. Many senior citizens have some fascinating stories to tell; and all too often, we don't take advantage of their wisdom. Have you ever sat down with the elderly in your life and just listened to them? Have they told you about their childhoods? Their young adult years? What it was like to grow up when and where they did?

What the Bible Says

“You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:32).

“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Paul Asay has written for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, Beliefnet.com and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *PluggedIn* and wrote the Batman book *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He recently collaborated with Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, on his book *The Good Dad*. He lives in Colorado Springs with wife, Wendy, and his two children. Follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.