

# Accept people in different seasons of their lives

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## Investments and Retirement Planning



**“I have 1,872 Facebook friends, so I figure at least ONE will be willing to support me in my old age!”**

You're a different person at different stages of your life.

Ten years ago, when I started working at my current church, I met a man named Bob (I'll use that name because that was his name). He was a delightful man. He arrived early on Sunday mornings to help prepare the sanctuary for worship; he was friendly and engaging; he had a positive attitude. We had lunch together about every six months and developed a friendship.

Several years ago Bob was diagnosed with a fast-growing brain tumor and died within four months.

At his funeral, his brother, who was a pastor, spoke. I was shocked to hear him describe Bob as a difficult person to be around; he even said that family members might have had a hard time attending his funeral.

After the funeral I emailed the brother and shared my dismay at how he had spoken poorly about Bob. After all, it was the man's *funeral*. I'll never forget his long and thorough reply. It taught me a valuable life-lesson.

In his early years, Bob was, indeed, a very difficult person to be around. Through the years he had abused his family relationships; some of them were irreparably damaged. In his speech at the funeral, his brother was trying to help family members understand the complexities of the relationships and encourage them to forgive Bob, for their own peace of mind.

His carefully worded email made sense. It helped me understand what he was trying to do at the funeral. He also affirmed my love and appreciation for Bob and taught me an important life-lesson by saying, “Don we all go through seasons of life. You met Bob later in life; he was different then. But don't judge others

who knew him in a different season.”

In a similar scenario, I once became friends with a man who had made major mistakes in the early days of his profession. Someone who was hurt by his mistakes derided me for starting a friendship with him and suggested that I disavow him and distance myself from him. Was I wrong in pursuing this relationship?

Here's what I've learned.

- When we meet someone, accept him as he is at his current stage in life; don't discount his life because of past mistakes. Hopefully, we're all progressing and improving throughout our lives. We need acceptance and grace in every season.
- Don't judge someone who has disengaged from a relationship that was abusive or unhealthy because sometimes it's best to sever an abusive relationship and cease all ties. (Though all of us should forgive our offenders, that doesn't mean we must remain friends with them.)

Here's a parting thought: we all have a best friend during each stage of our lives; blessed is the person who has the same friend throughout all stages of life.