

When Should I Retire?

There is an anonymous quip that has a strange truth to it about retirement – “The fellow who can't figure out what to do with a Sunday afternoon is often the same one who can't wait for retirement.” The implication is that the fellow in the quip may not be ready to retire, at least not yet.

“When should I retire?” is a good question (much better than the simplistic question, “When can I retire?”). But perhaps an even better question is “What should I do in my retirement?” That is because you are not just retiring from work. You are also retiring into something, whatever that may be. Maybe if that fellow could figure out what to do on a Sunday afternoon, he would be better prepared for retirement.

A Christian author commented as follows:

RETIREMENT:

It is not a reward for good behavior.

It is not a formula. One type does not fit all.

It is not a retreat or withdrawal. It is an intentional advance.

It is not busy work. It is a balance between leisure and work.

It is not self-centered. It is meant to be more than for my benefit.

It is not guaranteed. It depends on God's sovereignty. We may not live to see it.



Wrapped up in that paragraph are many truths. Let's apply those truths. Assuming you are blessed with a long and fruitful life, in applying those truths, you are answering those two questions; “When should you retire?” and “What will you do the day after that last day at work?”

Those are both good questions and deserve careful and prayerful consideration. Let's consider each together in the framework of those truths.

When Should I Retire and What Should I Do in My Retirement?

The first is an entirely personal question. The answer will be entirely dependent upon many very personal factors, including:

Your financial situation

The economy

Your health

What you want to do

What you can do

Your employer

Your enjoyment at your work

Your family

Your interests

There may be good reasons to retire early, or at least as early as possible. But that is not as easy as you may think. Consider these aspects of the issue:

1. Retirement Isn't the End, It Is a New Beginning

Billy Graham was right when he wrote, "I never read in the Bible where God retired anybody." ***You are retiring from work, you are not retiring from life.*** In fact, for many, retiring from work isn't exactly the way they retire. Many retire from "work" and start a new career, one that is at least an interest and hopefully a passion. Your retirement years can and should be far more active and fulfilling than getting up late and reading all of the newspaper every morning, followed by watching all of the news on every channel.

If you have retired early enough and have maintained good health, you still should have many good and productive years ahead of you. Consider these possibilities:

Start a new health routine; sleep a little later, eat a healthy breakfast and then walk and exercise. One thing many on a "work" schedule do that is unhealthy is cut their sleep short. Another is miss out on the best and most important meal of the day; breakfast. And exercise, well, there just wasn't time for it with work calling. But now there is time for each. These are all elements of a good length and quality of life.



Perhaps you can turn your hobby, that activity you are passionate about, into a part-time job that generates some income. That can be a low stress activity that will fulfill you physically and mentally, fill some of you time (but far short of 40-50-60 hours a week), and generate a small amount of income.

And never forget God in your retirement. Those extra hours are an opportunity to serve Him and stay in relationship with others. Forgetting God is bad at any time in your life, but Jesus gave us a special prod with a parable in Luke 12.

Luke 12:16-21

16 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,

- 17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'
- 18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.
- 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'
- 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'
- 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

(ESV)

There is not a lot of subtlety in that parable. One of several morals from that story is that you should not leave God out of your retirement plans (or any plans for that matter).

But let's not leave it at that simple level. In your years of work and life you have learned some things well. Granted not everyone has learned everything they could or should have learned, but you still have some experience that makes some parts of work easier and which make life less work. Don't waste that accumulated experience.

"Age is only a number, a cipher for the records. A man can't retire his experience. He must use it. Experience achieves more with less energy and time."

Bernard Baruch, U. S. businessman and politician

You can still work and earn some money if you want and/or if you need the income. There is no shame in working for a living. God made us to work. See Genesis 3. With good fortune and effort, you can find a job that is part-time, less stressful and perhaps even enjoyable. Jobs offer more than an income as well. There can be a social benefit to work because of the interaction and relationships that can be formed with co-laborers.

If money isn't an issue, then find a satisfying volunteer job. There are many opportunities in the Tampa Bay area and at Idlewild Baptist Church, opportunities to work, socialize and serve God, all at the same time.

Also, if money isn't an issue, mission work through the missions ministry of Idlewild Baptist Church offers many local, national and international opportunities to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the love of God to Jerusalem, Judea and the outmost parts of the earth. Between the Idlewild ministries to missions, recreation, seniors and children, you



have opportunities to serve that can fulfill your spiritual needs and bless you and those you serve at the same time.

2. Life Is Uncertain, Don't Let Life Pass You By

Any comment about the uncertainty of life is always met with verbal agreement, but no one expects to be the unfortunate person called home to be with the Lord earlier than most. Most people live and act as if they will live many, many more years. But at least some will be mistaken. A life expectancy is only an average and cannot be an expectation, because the problem with an average is that about half will live less than that number.

If travel is your interest, then retiring early fits that part of your interests well. It is far easier to put up with hauling luggage around and meandering through airports at 60 than at 80. Give thought to traveling and serving at the same time by checking with Pastor Ray in the Missions Department.

If serving is your interest, there are opportunities for every age, but naturally there are more opportunities the younger and more physically capable you are. Is that a reason to retire earlier if you are able? Yes, and it may be a calling as much as merely an opportunity. Check out these possibilities.

3. Retirement Can Be a Blessing, Especially Early Retirement

You may love your job – many do. If so, it is much easier to delay retirement and keep working. After all, if your job is something you love to do, and if you are still able to work and work well, then there may be no reason to retire early and many reasons to stay at work. As commented earlier, work is nothing to be ashamed of. Cellist Pablo Casals loved his musical expression so much that he wrote, "To retire is to begin to die." That may be true for those whose "work" is their life and their passion, but not for others.

You may have interests or passions that can't be fulfilled until you are free from work. In that situation, retiring from "work" as early as possible may be your goal. But retiring before 66 (that age is a moving target because the government keeps raising the bar) presents several potential problems.

First, the earlier you retire and draw Social Security, the lower the benefit. Check the projections showing the difference between drawing early Social Security at 62 and drawing at age 70, the difference is large.

Second, there is the issue of health insurance. Many younger people take the gamble and go without coverage. No person should consider that a good option but that is especially true for those above 50. Medicare is available at age 66 at this time. There is a premium cost to Medicare but by adding either a supplement or an advantage plan (there are many options), you can reduce or even eliminate the costs of much if not all future medical care. But Medicare has premiums which must be paid. You can't retire from a full-time job with benefits until you can protect yourself.



Third, you may not have enough in savings to allow you to do what your passion is calling you to. It usually takes a lifetime of careful saving and planning to accumulate enough to free you up to do what you really want to do.

If you have questions about these complex issues, call us at The Idlewild Foundation. While our passion is stewardship, we may be able to offer help and assistance on these complex issues.

But the truth remains; there is no Biblical retirement. We are called to work and serve in love and there is no mention in the Bible of a true servant of God sitting back and recreationally enjoying his or her senior years. Peter, Paul and the rest of the early church founders except for the Apostle John served until their deaths, most of which were when they were fairly young. John served into his 90s by the estimate of most commentators. If you look back into the Old Testament, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and many of the major figures served well into their senior years. You probably can't name one who didn't - there weren't any.

There is one goal you should have in retirement – serve God joyfully and with all of your heart!

