

Increasing Your Life Span

Retirement

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Given 20-Jul-13; Sermon #1168c

What I have to talk to you about today affects the future, welfare, and mental state of everyone from about age 16 on up to, let's say, death. It's important because it's a mindset that you could decide to have early on in life, or if you are retired now, one that you maybe have have now or from here on out.

Let me ask you a question (at least you older ones): Are you sweating retirement? If you are retired, you may be worried about making ends meet on a fixed income. If you are planning for retirement, you may be worried about, "how in the world will I afford this?"

It has been found that Americans have six lifestyle choices as they age:

- 1) Continuing to work full time
- 2) Continuing to work part time
- 3) Retiring from work and becoming engaged in a variety of leisure activities
- 4) Retiring from work and becoming involved in a variety of recreational and leisure activities
- 5) Retiring from work and later returning to work part time
- 6) Retiring from work and later returning to work full time

So, you have six choices on what you can do.

An important note to make from these lifestyle definitions are that four of the six involve working. Interesting. Retirement is the point where a person stops full employment completely, at least the way I'm describing it today. A person may also semi-retire by reducing work hours.

The reasons that some people choose never to retire or to return to work after retiring include not only the difficulty of planning for retirement, but also wages and fringe benefits, expenditure of physical and mental energy, the production of goods and services (that is, the need for food, clothing and housing); also, social interaction and social status may interact to influence an individual's decision not to retire.

Many people choose to retire when they are eligible for private or public benefits, although some are forced to retire when physical conditions no longer allow the person to work anymore by illness or accident, or as a result of legislation concerning their position. Some people are just legislated, ruled right out, of being able to work anymore.

In most countries, the idea of retirement is of recent origin, being introduced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Previously, short life expectancy and the absence of pension arrangements meant that most workers continued to work until death. Nowadays, most developed countries have

systems to provide pensions on retirement in old age, which may be sponsored by employers or the state. In many poorer countries, support for the old is mainly provided through the family.

Today, retirement with a pension is considered a right of the worker in many societies, and hard ideological, social, cultural, and political battles have been fought over whether this is a right. In many Western countries, this right is mentioned in national constitutions. It's the law of the land.

Many retirees feel restless and suffer from depression as a result of their new situation, and although it is not scientifically possible to directly show that retirement either causes or contributes to depression, the newly retired are one of the most vulnerable social groups when it comes to depression, most likely due to confluence of increasing age and deteriorating health status.

Health status is a very important issue. A great deal of research has examined the effects of health status and health shocks on retirement. It is widely found that individuals in poor health generally retire earlier than those in better health. (That's no surprise; that would be common sense.)

It never ceases to amaze me how a person will worry about his retirement plan and investments most of his working life, but neglect the most important physical thing regarding himself: his health. Why do people not put at least the same amount of time, money, and effort into maintaining good health as they do in saving for their retirement? What good is looking to retirement if you have neglected your health? Why not take good care of your health and not need to retire? What a wonderful blessing it would be to be healthy enough to work until the day you die. And that's what most people did before this century. This society has the ideas of retirement and good health upside down and backwards, as they do everything else in Satan's world.

The November 2012 issue of *Whistleblower* magazine has a thought-provoking article by Rabbi Daniel Lapin titled, "Never Retire," in which he emphasizes that the key to longevity is caring for others. In the article, he quotes Dr. Donald Hensrud, the director of the Mayo Clinic Executive Health Program. Dr. Hensrud says, "Life revolves around relationships, and it shows in aging people who maintain close relationships live longer and more healthfully. It may sound corny, but caring for others helps us care for ourselves."

Biblically, working productively means that you are caring for others. That's the principle that we see throughout Scripture. Retirement is essentially selfish. It is hard to maintain meaningful relationships with others when you are retired because you are concerned chiefly with yourself, and it shows. Some of our most involved relationships are in our places of work and with our colleagues at work. This is not surprising because mutual dependency creates ideal conditions for a meaningful relationship, and it is at work that we recognize our dependency upon one another. Obviously, without effective work in marketing, the efforts of the engineering department are futile. Unless the sales people produce results, the folks in accounting will not have a job. And so it goes. If you are getting paid to do something, you can rest assured, you are doing something that is meaningful and valuable to at least one other person. No retired person has a reliable indicator of his usefulness to others.

Dr. Hensrud continues:

During our working years, we are busy, stimulated, and in demand. Some people look at retirement as a time to kick back, watch the roses bloom, and drift off. In my experience, those people do not do well mentally or physically.

The Hebrew language does not even recognize the concept of retirement. It is a principle in ancient Hebrew that any concept for which no Hebrew word exists does not itself exist. When words do not exist for timeless human concepts, the concepts are not real. One such concept is coincidence. It's literally no coincidence that ancient Hebrew doesn't recognize the concept of coincidence. And in a Judaic view of reality, nothing just happens in total isolation of and by itself. Every event is tied to earlier events as it is to subsequent consequences.

Even admitting the word coincidence to your personal lexicon misleads you into occasionally viewing events as, well, coincidences, instead of understanding them accurately to be links in a chain of occurrences.

Another concept that the ancient Hebrews do not recognize is retirement. No word exists in Hebrew for retirement, which indicates to the devotees of ancient Hebrew that the very concept of retirement is flawed—the very idea of it. But from the time we are a child, from the time we get our first job, what do we do? We are not concerned about retirement at that young age, but it does play into our work mentality for the rest of our lives.

Consider that we do have concepts that exist but are almost impossible to imagine. For instance, in mathematics, we use the concept of imaginary numbers, such as the square root of minus one. What in the world is that? I asked that when I learned it, and I'm still asking it to this day. Most people find it difficult to imagine this number. It's so useful that mathematicians have even given it a name. They call it *i*.

Well, just as we have concepts that exist but are hard to describe, we also have concepts that are easy to describe but that do not exist. Coincidence and retirement are examples of concepts that can certainly be described, but that do not exist in reality. Yes, someone can decide simply to stop working, but giving a name to such an irrational action does not confer upon it any legitimate reality whatsoever. It's almost as ridiculous as deciding to stop breathing or to stop eating. Being alive means that we breathe, eat, and work. We do more than these basics, of course, but that is where it begins.

The apostle Paul reinforces this concept when he writes the church in Thessalonica:

II Thessalonians 3:10 . . . we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

In a world where human labor is God's appointed means of provision, the sluggard is just asking for trouble. Chapters 19 and 20 of Proverbs warns that because the sluggard does not plow in the autumn, he will seek at harvest and have nothing. The result: The idle person will suffer hunger.

Prior to about the 1950s, there was no such thing as retirement as we use the term today. A 1950 poll shows that most workers aspired to work as long as possible, therefore taking care of their health as long as possible. Quitting was for the disabled, and life did not offer twilight years, where one had perhaps two decades of uninterrupted leisure, courtesy of others.

So we are all left with this biblical warning from the book of Proverbs. The sluggard begins the day away by staying in bed when he should be beginning his work. He finds preposterous reasons to avoid going to work, such as the possibility of there being a lion—that is, an obstacle—on the road. As for excessive devotion to one's bed, Proverbs decries, "As a door turns on its hinges, so does the

sluggard on his bed." The sheer lack of exertion is captured by the caricature of the sluggard's burying his hand in the dish but being too lazy even to bring the food to his mouth.

I do not mean in any way to demean anyone that's retired or anyone that has a life of leisure, so to speak. All I'm trying to do is impress upon all of us, all the way back to the earliest stages, that we should rid our minds of the word "retirement" and not approach life as if we are going to someday retire from what we are doing, but realize that we are to work for the rest of our lives, til the day we die, as we are able. We may not be physically able to do the jobs we were doing, but there is always certain things that we can do, as long as our mind is working. Just one thing comes to mind: writing articles or writing things that will help those younger than than you are. Those who are in their seventies, eighties and nineties have a lot of experience they can share with others. So I'm not in any way demeaning those who are retired. I'm just emphasizing that the word "retirement" is an absolutely ridiculous concept according to God's way of life.

The external symptoms of the sluggard all indicate a lack of work. So, although being retired does not necessarily mean a person is lazy, the retiree must exert extra effort to avoid the pitfall of idleness, which is supported by the average retirement lifestyle and mentality today in the United States and many European countries. There will be no sluggards in God's kingdom. Members of God's family will never be idle and will never retire.