

1. What does the Bible say about retirement?

People like the idea of retirement. After all those years of working hard, progressing in our careers, and making sacrifices, we feel like retirement is when we have finally *made it*. We see it as a season to enjoy all the luxuries we have convinced ourselves we deserve. Reaching 65 is heralded as a time when you can quit your job, kick your feet up, and let Social Security serve *you* for a change. But this attitude about retirement is not biblical.

To fully understand what the Bible says about retirement, we must go back to the beginning – when God first created man. In Genesis, God creates Adam and gives him charge to work and manage the garden. He is to have dominion over the Earth. God gave Adam a job!

Granted, Adam got to skip the interviewing process, and could not exactly provide any references, but God chose him for the job and gave him a clear job description. Adam enjoyed his work and the (literal) fruit of his labor.

Then sin entered the world.

What this tells us is that work is good. It was created *before* the fall of man. It was integral to how God designed us, and always part of His plan for us. Research supports God's original design – that working keeps our bodies healthy, our minds sharp, and our lifespan longer.

(<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/retirement/120516/retirement-and-depression-6-ways-overcome-it.asp>)

So, we know that work is good. But does that mean retirement is bad?¹

Although there is no biblical principle that a person should retire from his work when he reaches a certain age, there is the example of the Levites and their work in the tabernacle. In [Numbers 4](#), the Levite males are numbered for service in the tabernacle from ages 25-50 years old, and after age 50, they were to retire from regular service. They could continue to “assist their brothers” but could not continue to work ([Numbers 8:24-26](#)).

2) Even though we may retire from our vocations (even “full-time” Christian ministry), we should never retire from serving the Lord, although the way we serve Him may change. There is the example of two very old people in [Luke 2:25-38](#) (Simeon and Anna) who continued to serve the Lord faithfully. Anna was an elderly widow who ministered in the temple daily with fasting and prayer. [Titus 2](#) states that the older men and women are to teach, by example, younger men and women how to live.

¹ <https://www.crown.org/blog/what-does-the-bible-say-about-retirement-2/>

3) One's older years are not to be spent solely in the pursuit of pleasure. Paul says that the widow who lives for pleasure is dead while she yet lives (1 Timothy 5:6). Contrary to biblical instruction, many people equate retirement with "pursuit of pleasure" if possible. This is not to say that retirees cannot enjoy golf, social functions, or pleasurable pursuits. But these should not be the primary focus of one's life at any age.

4) [Second Corinthians 12:14](#) states that the parent ought to save up for the children. But by far the greatest thing to "save up" is one's spiritual heritage, which can be passed on to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Generations of descendants have been impacted by the faithful prayers of an elderly family "patriarch" or "matriarch." Prayer is perhaps the most fruitful ministry outlet for those who have retired.

The Christian never retires from Christ's service; he only changes the address of his workplace. In summary, as one reaches "retirement age" (whatever that is) the vocation may change but one's life work of serving the Lord does not change. Often it is these "senior saints" who, after a lifetime of walking with God, can convey the truths of God's Word by relating how God has worked in their lives. The psalmist's prayer should be our prayer as we age: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" ([Psalm 71:18](#)).²

2. What are the qualifications of elders and deacons?

The Bible has a clear set of qualifications for a deacon and an elder and their positions in the body of believers. The office of deacon was developed to deal with a practical issue in the church: "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables'" (Acts 6:2). The word translated "wait on" is the Greek word *diakonein* [*DI or DEE-AK-ON-E-O*]³, which comes from a word meaning "attendant, waiter, or one who ministers to another." To "deacon" is to serve. The first deacons were a group of seven men in the Jerusalem church who were appointed to work in the daily food distribution. A deacon, therefore, is one who serves others in an official capacity in the church.

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/retirement-Christian.html>

³ <https://biblehub.com/greek/1247.htm>

The Greek word translated “bishop” is *episkopos* [EP-IS-KOP-OS]⁴(the source of our English word *episcopal*). The bishop is the superintendent, the overseer, or the officer in general charge of the congregation. In the Bible bishops are also called “elders” (1 Timothy 5:19) and “pastors” (Ephesians 4:11).

The qualifications of the bishop/elder/pastor are found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7: “Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” Paul also instructs Timothy on the things that exemplify the teaching of a good minister. Beginning in 1 Timothy 4:11 and continuing through 6:2, Paul gives Timothy twelve things that he should “command and teach.”

The apostle Paul repeats the qualifications of a bishop/elder/pastor in his letter to Titus. “An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:6–9).

The qualifications of a deacon are similar to those of a bishop/elder/pastor. “In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:8–13). The word translated “deacon” in this passage is a form of the same Greek word used in Acts 6:2, so we know we are talking about the same office.

⁴<https://biblehub.com/greek/1985.htm>

These qualifications are simple and straightforward. Both the deacon and the bishop/elder/pastor should be a male, the husband of one wife, of sterling character, and one who rules his own home in a biblical way. These qualifications also presuppose that one seeking such an office is a born-again believer and walks in submission to God's Word. The only substantial difference between the two sets of qualifications is that the bishop/elder/pastor must be "able to teach," whereas teaching is not mentioned as necessary for deacons.

The Lord Jesus Himself is called the "Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). The titles are interesting. The word *Shepherd* is a translation of the Greek word *poimen* [POY-MANE]⁵, translated "pastor" elsewhere (e.g., Ephesians 4:11). This *poimen* is someone who tends herds or flocks and is used metaphorically of Christian pastors because pastors should guide the "flock" of God and feed them the Word of God. The word translated "Overseer" is the same word, *episkopos*, used by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy and Titus.

Clearly, the offices of elder and deacon are important in the church. Ministering to God's people in word and deed is a serious responsibility for a man to take on, and it should never be done lightly. A biblically unqualified individual should not occupy either the office of elder or deacon; the church deserves better.⁶

⁵ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/poimen.html>

⁶ <https://www.gotquestions.org/qualifications-elders-deacons.html>