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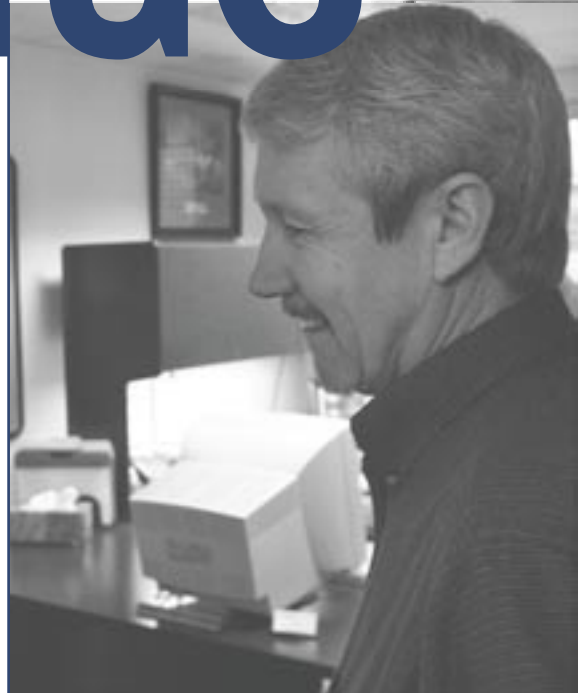
# CALLINGS

**Retirement and vocation from a biblical perspective**

*A study guide for groups and individuals*

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*A Discipleship Resource of the Brethren in Christ Church*



The perspectives on the second half of life that Doug Sider, Sr., Marion Yoder, and Nina Schmucker embrace contrast strongly with the view of retirement as leisure time to fill with hobbies, travel, and relaxation. Although these activities can be an important part of a balanced life, Nina, Doug, and Marion have found specific areas of work and service to which they devote much of their time and energy. What is God's perspective on our roles in society and the Church as we mature past the halfway mark in life? How will the Church respond to the changing needs of the baby boomer generation as its members near the age of 60?

## SESSION I—Retirement, not retreat

Doug Sider encourages those over 50 to “keep dreaming, keep planning, and keep contributing to culture, to society, and to the cause of Christ.”

1. In what ways does your current work or area of ministry allow you to keep dreaming, planning and contributing even as you move into retirement age?

Marion Yoder talked about an interest in battling poverty that drew him into his life's work when he was young and influenced his retirement activities. Nina, Doug, and Marion all expressed joy and contentment in their various types of work.

2. How do you feel about your current work experience or area of ministry? Does it connect with gifts and callings in your life?
3. Does your current job or ministry give you the opportunity for satisfaction—and even joy—in your work?

**This study guide is based on *Second Callings*, a feature article appearing in the spring 2006 issue of *Seek* magazine. The article can be viewed or downloaded at [www.bic-church.org/seek](http://www.bic-church.org/seek).**

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New International Version (NIV).

**Read Colossians 3:23 and Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 and 3:9–14 and discuss these biblical writers' views of work.**

4. What is your current view of retirement and how do you think you might use that time?

5. What other scripture passages apply to using our gifts and talents in our later years?

Marion Yoder's new vocation gives him more time to enjoy interacting with others. Doug Sider said his early work as a minister allows him to see his new work as an opportunity to "take Christ into the marketplace."

6. What skills and interests have you developed over the years that you could offer to another ministry or vocation?

7. What part of your current job or ministry do you wish you could spend more time doing?

**Read Psalm 127:1–2**

8. What is the balance between work and play and time for family in our lives as we grow older? How do we maintain that balance?

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."*

—Colossians 3:23

*"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain."*

—Psalm 127:1a

## SESSION II—A God-focused retirement

Nina Schmucker says people who view retirement as a time to focus solely on themselves are “losing out spiritually.” Read Luke 2:25–38. Simeon and Anna were older adults serving at the temple. Simeon was called righteous and devout. Anna is called a prophetess.

1. What roles do you think these two older people played in the life of the temple?

2. What influence and significance do you think they had? How did God honor them?

### Read Isaiah 46:3–4

3. Does our relationship with God change as we grow older?

4. Did your relationship with God change during other stages in your life?

### Read Hebrews 6:10–12

5. What are the roles of older, more mature Christians in the church today?

6. What type of intergenerational connections are important to the growth of the church? How do older and younger adults foster those relationships?

*“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you.”  
—Isaiah 46:4a*

*“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”  
—Hebrews 6:10*

Nina Schmucker is not just the coordinator of her local clothing distribution center. She also teaches a Bible study, invites her granddaughter over to practice piano, and spends time with family and friends.

7. What are some of the congregational, family and societal roles older adults play and how do these influence our career and retirement choices?

Marion Yoder had a desire to contribute to the battle against poverty, which led him into his life's work. Nina Schmucker thrives on the vision of giving to others to meet their needs. Doug Sider has taken his callings to preach and to lead into a new arena.

8. What early dreams and promptings from God did you have? Are they being fulfilled?

9. How can you continue or pursue these in retirement?

## SESSION III – Retirement and the Church

Nina, Doug, and Marion are all actively involved in ministries connected with local churches.

### Read Jeremiah 6:16

1. What, do you believe, is the Church's responsibility to those nearing and working through retirement?

2. What is retirement age? What do you picture yourself doing at age 62? 72? 82? 92?

*“This is what the LORD says:  
‘Stand at the crossroads and  
look; ask for the ancient paths,  
ask where the good way is,  
and walk in it, and you will  
find rest for your souls.’”  
—Jeremiah 6:16a*

3. How might the Church's role in your life—and your role in the Church—change through these ages?

Nina took an ordinary situation in her life (clothes given to her for her children) and turned it into an opportunity for her church and others to reach out to her community. Marion Yoder assists seniors in getting access to computers and computer skills. Doug Sider speaks to older adults about retirement.

4. Do you agree with Nina Schmucker that we stay healthier if we are up and working? Give examples to back up your response.

5. What role should the church play in assisting seniors to stay active?

6. How might health or other limitations affect individual plans? How should the Church assist those with health issues who are still capable of involvement in ministry?

Doug Sider talks about the need to keep dreaming, planning and contributing when you hit the midpoint in life.

5. Do you see any new dreams God is bringing into your life? If you are under 50, do you see any seeds of future dreams? What role does the Church play in following through on those dreams?

6. What does it mean to keep planning? What retirement plans have you already made? What are your thoughts about financial, work, or travel plans for the second half of life?

## Read I Timothy 6:17–19

7. How do you plan to “keep contributing” as a retiree? In what ways would you like to contribute to culture? Society? The cause of Christ?

Many of us have grown up and worked with the dream of retirement years as an opportunity to pursue interests we postponed while pursuing careers, raising families and devoting time to church or ministry.

8. How do we preserve some of those hopes for travel, more leisure or family time, or the enjoyment of hobbies while pursuing a second calling?

## SESSION IV – Ministry and mentoring after 50

### Read I Peter 5:1–6

1. What is your current role in your church?

Marion took the computer skills he had and matched them with the needs of a people group he had been working with for years. Doug realized his own hopes and concerns about his post-50 life matched those of his peers and he began a ministry of service, encouragement, and counsel to others.

2. How could your current interests and areas of ministry expand if you had more time to devote to them?

3. Are you aware of all the ministry opportunities available through your church or by partnering with another church? [You might want to invite someone from your pastoral staff to talk to your group about outreach opportunities.]

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

—I Timothy 6:17

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.”

—I Peter 5:2a

The Bible is rife with examples of changing vocations. When Jesus called the apostles, they left various occupations to become evangelists and teachers. David was anointed to be king when he was just a young man. But he was a shepherd, harpist, and soldier before he became king.

4. In what ways do you think David's and the disciples' first responsibilities prepared them for their later work?

5. What skills, education, training, and knowledge have you garnered through jobs and life experience that you could take into a "second calling?"

### **Read Matthew 28:16–20**

6. What did you learn from mentors along the way and how will you pass that knowledge along to the following generations?

7. What is the role of younger generations in leadership and how do the various generations work together?

8. What adjustments might churches have to make as the large group of baby boomers begins to turn sixty?

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."  
—Matthew 28:19*

Whether you're already retired or retirement is still decades away, it's important to remember that God's calling on our lives extends to people of all ages, and that you never retire from being a disciple of Christ. The Church needs the insight, prayers, and willing hands of all of us, including those who have lived more than a half-century; God seeks devoted believers who are following their first, second, or further callings.