

Antology

Lessons from the ant for our own financial future

O. S. HAWKINS



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*To the sweet memory of those who, since 1918, have been
“serving those who serve the Lord” through GuideStone
Financial Resources. And, to those who serve with us today
in the spirit of King David, “with the integrity of their
hearts and the skillfulness of their hands.”*



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INTRODUCTION



“Retire”...the very sound of the word carries with it the connotation of resignation or retreat. For many in our modern world retirement seems to be synonymous with an attitude of “settling down” - or even “settling in” - to a lifestyle that often buries our talents and treasures and that can inevitably lead to becoming content with a life that, all too often, can result in just meaningless monotony.

This brings us to the question – Is retirement Biblical? There is certainly not a prohibition of it in the Bible. The truth is, it simply is not discussed in any degree of context. In fact, as far as I can tell, there is only one reference to what we understand as retirement in the Bible. This is found in the book of Numbers in relationship to those involved in the Levitical priesthood services of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and later of the Temple in Jerusalem. Here the Bible states, “This is what applies to the Levites: from

twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting. But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more.”(Numbers 8:24-25 NASV). The reason God gave this directive to the priests of the Temple is shrouded in silence.

My point in these opening paragraphs is a simple one. If, in fact, you are a part of the tribe of Levi and engaged in the Levitical services of the Temple then your retirement is Biblical and you must obey this Biblical directive. If you are not a Levitical priest serving in the Temple then retirement may not be as Biblical as some of us have surmised and imagined and this volume may be designed just for you. Read on.

For many it may be a surprise to discover that the idea of retirement is a relatively modern phenomenon and is a direct result of an affluent culture. My own great-grandparents knew nothing of the concept of retirement. Their generation worked as long as they were physically able and for most of them right up

until the time of their death. The American workforce went through tremendous changes in the first half of the twentieth century. The revolution of industry moved people from their farms into factories where they became wage earners. In the first few decades of the last century life expectancy increased more rapidly than at any other time in recorded history. Then came the Great Depression and the political pressure to pass the Social Security Act of 1935 which provided for benefits to be paid to workers at age sixty-five. Interestingly, the male life expectancy in 1930 was fifty-eight years! As the decades unfolded and mindsets became more and more entrenched, Americans began to view their retirement at age sixty-five as more of an entitlement.



And yet, nowhere do we read in the Bible where the Christian minister is to “retire” from his calling or his service to Christ and the church. While it is true that most of us must retire “vocationally” from church service this does not necessitate our retiring from Christian

ministry. John, the beloved apostle, was over ninety and still preaching and writing while exiled on Patmos. Polycarp, the pastor of the Smyrna church, testified at his martyrdom as the flames consumed his body, saying he had served Christ for “eighty and six years.” The intent of this volume is not to give direction as to what to do in your retirement years, but instead, to motivate you to make ready for that season of life so that you will have the financial freedom to serve Christ in new and expanding opportunities, even after your “vocational” retirement. No minister of the gospel should think about “retiring,” but instead should put the focus on “retooling” for the most productive years of life and ministry which could potentially take place during those “retirement” years.

I think it is safe to assume that many of the readers of this volume were born between the years of 1946 and 1964. This group, of course, is known by the popular connotation of “baby boomers.” They emerged in great numbers in the post-World War II years. By the time they all



reach “retirement age” in approximately 2030, coupled with the ever-decreasing birth rates in the United States, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that a full one-third of the American population will be over fifty years of age. And, thanks to the economic prosperity of the last few decades, modern technology and the incredible advances in modern medicine, many of this group of aging Americans will live healthy and active lives for twenty, or even twenty-five years, after their “vocational retirement.” Thus, for those of us in Christian ministry, herein lies the possibility of unleashing upon our world the greatest force of volunteers on mission the world has ever imagined, much less seen. If (and that is a huge “if”) they make wise preparation spiritually and financially for their retirement years.

This brings us to the strange title of the volume you hold in your hands... ANTOLOGY. What on earth is this and what does it have to do with the issue of retirement? Solomon, who was reported to be the wisest man who ever lived, addressed this subject in a unique way in the writing of

his Proverbs when he challenged us to, “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise. Which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.” (Proverbs 6:6-8). King Solomon reminds us that much can be learned from studying the ant as it particularly applies to our own winter season of life. The ant “stores” her provisions in the summer and “gathers” her provisions in harvest for a very important reason. Winter is coming! And with it will surely come the need for added provisions that are not readily obtainable. Storing financial resources in our productive income-producing years, that is, during the summer and fall seasons of life, is smart and logical. And, as Solomon reveals, it is also Biblical. If this is good advice for an ant...it is good advice for those who are active in serving in gospel ministry. As the pages unfold before us we are going to “go to the ant”... “consider her ways”...and hopefully...“be wise”...by following Solomon’s advice and the ant’s example.



Thousands of ministers are marching through life today without giving any thought to this vital discipline. For many, it is increasingly beyond their perceived reach as they seek to exist on meager salaries. However, for some it is also the result of a lack of discipline to save and “store” for the future because of the compelling quest of immediate gratification in our consumer-driven culture. It is no wonder Solomon addressed this issue to “the sluggard.” Every day, we at GuideStone see a tragic epidemic growing among thousands of our dear retired pastors and in too many cases their sweet and godly widows. They are not financially ready for their retirement years. Thousands of them who have served Christ faithfully through the decades are now living on \$200 or less in retirement benefits each month. Most of them pastored out at the crossroads in very small churches and are anything but “sluggards.” They simply were never able to make financial preparation. However, there are those, unfortunately, who find themselves in this

predicament because when they were able to do something about it in their earlier years they did little, and in some cases did nothing, as they postponed this responsibility. We are privileged here at GuideStone to be able to be Christ's hand extended to thousands of precious people who were unable to make adequate retirement preparation by helping to meet their needs and expenses through our Mission:Dignity ministry. But there is a better way. We are about to discover it as we heed Solomon's advice and "go to the ant...consider her ways... and be wise!"



The passion behind this book is to move men and women who are called into Christ's service to see the urgency and necessity of making adequate and consistent preparation for their retirement years. For the most part, the next two generations who are coming to retirement are going to have twenty or more healthy and productive years to serve the Lord after they "vocationally retire" from their churches or places of service. If we can partner with them

in helping them get to this place of vocational retirement with adequate financial security and dignity we are going to help unleash on our world the greatest force of volunteers on mission our world has ever seen! I can see retired pastors going for several months partnering with young church planters by pouring their lives and experience into helping those church starts thrive and grow. I can see literally thousands going to the foreign fields for short-term service with forces like our International Service Corps and other foreign mission efforts. I can see thousands of retired church workers making a difference in their own community mission projects. The real purpose of this labor is to see a new generation of God-called ministers who will not so much be giving thought to what it means to “retire,” but instead, giving attention to what it means to “retool” for a new season of life and ministry.

But there is a catch! Unless we know something of “antology,” unless we “go to the ant, consider her ways and be wise,” we will never reach our

desired end. Unless, young reader, you begin to prepare now, the odds of being free to use those last productive years of ministry will slip away. We are big believers in planning. We plan for everything. Church programs. Education. Vacations. Weddings. This is a call to begin now to make plans and follow them, to begin to “store” up now in the spring, summer and fall seasons of life. Why? Because winter is coming!

When I was a child there was a railroad crossing not far from my house. A thousand times I rode my bicycle through that crossing. There were no modern barriers there in those days. There was simply an old sign made of two boards in the shape of a cross and nailed diagonally to a pole. It indicated that there was a railroad crossing and it had three words in bold red letters. STOP...LOOK...LISTEN. This three-fold warning reminded me to come to a stop before crossing the tracks. When stopped, it reminded me to look carefully both ways down the tracks as far as I could. But that is not all. It also reminded me to listen and see if I could



hear a train whistle, which would indicate the train was bearing down on the intersection.

I have thought about that old railroad crossing as I have outlined and written this book. This is basically what this little volume you hold in your hand is calling you to do. First, it is calling on you to STOP. That is, “Go to the ant.” Some of life’s greatest lessons are in the simple things and are usually right under our nose if we stop long enough to observe them. The Lord Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived. And, He kept it simple. He talked about things like lilies of the field and birds of the air. Second, it is calling you to LOOK. That is, “...consider her ways...” It is not enough to stop, if you do not look intently upon these life lessons and “consider” them. Finally, this volume is a clarion call to LISTEN. That is, to “...be wise.” It is of little use to go to the ant and consider her ways if you do not apply her lessons to your own life and be wise in doing so. Thus we shall “stop” in part one and “look” in part two, and then hasten on to “listen” in part three to what

the Lord through Solomon is trying to tell us.

So let's embark on our journey and...STOP—
Go to the ant...LOOK—consider her ways...
and LISTEN—and be wise! We shall take this
journey with the hope and sincere desire that
we, too, will be on our way to “retooling”
instead of simply “retiring.”



PART ONE:

STOP—“Go to the ant...”



King Solomon is widely purported to be the wisest man who ever lived. For those of us who are on the journey toward the goal of financial freedom in our retirement years he offers some wise counsel. Like the bold red letters at the railroad crossing he admonishes us to STOP and “Go to the ant.” (Proverbs 6:6). On the surface this seems a strange place to begin our journey of what it will take to reach the retirement years with dignity. But what do we have to lose? Stop! Let’s go there, to the ant bed, and discover what it is about this tiny creature that can hold wisdom and revelation for us along our own personal journey.

Upon our arrival at the ant bed we immediately see a flurry of ants busy at their work. These pesky little creatures have been

on this earth as long as we have. In fact, there are over ten thousand known species of ants and they live on virtually every part of our planet. Like us humans, they come in different colors and different sizes. In some ways it is a woman's world in the ant colony. The queens often live for several years while the males have a life span of only a few weeks. It is estimated that the combined weight of all the ants in the world exceeds the weight of mankind. Now, that is a lot of ants!

Ants are social animals, simply meaning they live in highly organized colonies with well-defined tasks and responsibilities. They are among the most sophisticated and successful groups of insects in all the animal kingdom. These colonies often work together with other colonies to bring about a sort of super-colony that appears to work as one functioning unit across a whole field or parcel of ground. One might go so far as to say that the ant is an organizational genius in his own right, or better, in her own right.

Ants have highly intelligent and sophisticated ways of communicating with each other. When a scout finds food it immediately heads for home base leaving a secreted trail of pheromone in its wake. Within minutes an entire army is “on the trail,” headed for the food in order to haul it back to the storage facility deep within the ant bed. Here an ample supply awaits the winter months when food will be scarce.

Is it any wonder that Solomon challenges us to STOP-LOOK-LISTEN; to “go to the ant...consider her ways...and be wise”? We in ministry are marching today through life toward that place of vocational retirement. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a tragic epidemic among thousands of retired pastors. They are not ready for it financially. We at GuideStone seek to partner with thousands of pastors, church workers, teachers, missionaries and the like in meeting their retirement needs. I am sad to say we have thousands of these dear retired pastors, and in many cases, their widows, in their retirement and declining years who





are not really living with any sense of security. They are simply existing as best they can. Most of them pastored out at the crossroads in small and often out of the way places and they, or their churches, were unable to make financial preparation for the later years. However, some of them find themselves in this predicament because in their earlier years when they could have disciplined themselves to do something, they did little, and in some cases, nothing. While we have a wonderful relief ministry to help these people there is a better and more Biblical way for most of us. The journey begins in this chapter with a trip to the ant bed.

Interestingly, Solomon's strong suggestion that we "go to the ant" is directed at a certain type of individual; one he refers to as a "sluggard" (Proverbs 6:6). The Hebrew word carries with it the connotation of one who is sluggish, slothful or just downright lazy. The same word is more often translated "slothful" in the Old Testament. Solomon has in mind here one who has the ability to do something about his situation but is

simply too slothful or lazy to take responsibility. To this type of individual is given the admonition to “go to the ant.” And, once there, we find that if there was ever a creature that is diametrically opposite to this type of individual it is the ant.

Most of us, at one time or another in a fit of mischief, have come upon an anthill and stomped on it. What happens? The activity accelerates at a rapid pace as the ants scurry and get busy in making things right. They like structure and organization. Ant colonies are built on hard work and determined discipline. What is even more amazing is that, as Solomon points out, they have no “captain, overseer or ruler” (Proverbs 6:7). They work without coercion. They have no one guiding them, no one overseeing them, no one making sure they punch the time clock or that they get to work on time. They are self-starters who possess an incredibly high-energy work ethic. They are often found carrying a load many times their own body weight. It goes without saying the ant is one of the most industrious of all God’s

creation. They may be small in stature but they are shouting to us some valuable life lessons that need to be applied to each of our own lives.

So, as we take Solomon's advice and "go to the ant" we discover some amazing parallels to our own quest for our own retirement planning and our financial future. Let's observe what we learn by going to the ant.

Ants are highly disciplined and they lead decidedly disciplined lives. They live regimented lives. They know who they are and what their calling is within the ant colony. It never occurs to them to take extra time off on their breaks or to show up late for work.

Ants are hard workers. They have a work ethic that is second to none in all the creation. They persevere. They carry their load and then some. They are always on the move, redeeming the time, taking their work seriously. They have never heard of such things as four-day work weeks or paid time off.

Ants are self-starters. As noted above, they have no overseers or rulers. No one is around

to check up on them. They have never heard of such things as peer reviews or evaluation forms. They just get the job done and it never occurs to them to do their best work only when the boss is watching. They are self-starters and go-getters.

Ants are well organized. They have assigned tasks and work in cooperation with others. Some are workers who remove rubbish from the nest. Others are scouts whose task it is to find food. Others are soldiers who fight and defend the colony. Some are fertile and tasked with replenishing the colony. Some are infertile. They each have a job and function in an organized manner for the good of the colony. Ants do not build their own kingdoms around the office. They realize how dependent they are upon their fellow workers doing their assigned tasks with excellence. They know they all need each other so they work like a well-organized and well-oiled machine.

Ants overcome their obstacles. They do not give up when they are confronted with obstacles along their path. When an unexpected obstacle



of some sort interrupts their straight path back to the colony, they emit their pheromone trail which guides those who are coming behind them around the obstacle via the shortest route and straight back on course once again. They do not let a few unwelcome or unexpected obstacles get them off course. They just adjust and keep moving forward.

There could be no greater model than the ant for those of us busy in preparing for our financial future. Who would have thought we had so much to learn from such a seemingly insignificant part of God's creation.

When we "go to the ant" we note that, like the ant, if we ever hope to get to an adequate retirement we must be highly disciplined ourselves. It takes diligence, determination and, above all, discipline to adequately provide for retirement. This needed discipline shows up in a variety of ways such as the discipline to save a portion of our income monthly that can be put into a tax-deferred retirement vehicle that will grow across the years.



Like the ant, we too need to incorporate within us a strong work ethic that honors the Lord and provides for our family's future.

One of the pitfalls of some pastors is that they, like the ant, have no overseer or ruler to whom they are accountable. This begs all the more for the discipline of being a self-starter and taking initiative as it pertains to retirement planning and preparation. For most of us, no one is going to do it for us if we don't do it for ourselves.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn from the ant is that of being well organized ourselves. Fulfilling our assigned tasks and working in cooperation with others is vital in planning for the future. This is why we at GuideStone seek to build the lifelong partner principle with our participants. In this partnership our organization can work with you and for you through the years to guide you along the way toward the goal of adequate retirement provisions.

On this path to your financial future there are sure to be obstacles along the way. When we "go to the ant" we see how overcoming them

and getting right back on track is vital to our success. The financial markets have always been cyclical and will be in the future. From time to time there are obstacles along that path. For some, difficulties come in places of service or employment which can often get us off the path of retirement planning. Solomon is wise in pointing us to the ant to review and to remind us that we, too, must master the art of overcoming our obstacles along the way and not letting them get us sidetracked.

Ants are part of a team that works in unity for each other's mutual benefit. If ant colonies major on this, how much more should the church? It is time that faithful laymen in the church took seriously their responsibility to assist the pastor and church ministers with their retirement and benefit needs. One of the great disservices done to the local pastor is for the church to compensate him with a "package approach." By this I mean they pay the pastor a "lump sum" salary package, and it falls to him to divide this "salary" among his car expense, health

insurance, retirement contribution, business expenses and salary. This unfair arrangement forces the pastor to pay more in income taxes than he may legally owe. For example, by wisely using the “salary and benefit approach” rather than the “package approach,” the church can use tax savings on a \$40,000 total package to effectively increase their pastor’s cash salary by \$2,100 annually, net of taxes, without even giving a monetary increase.

STOP—“go to the ant.” Now that we have reviewed what Solomon has in mind we move next to his admonition to LOOK—“consider her ways.” It is one thing to go to the ant and see her for what she is but it is another step to do some research and look long enough at her to “consider her ways.” Yes, this tiny little critter that has so often ended up on the soles of our shoes is speaking to us today at a critical point of our need. Let’s continue on our journey of hearing and hopefully heeding what she has to say to us.



PART TWO:

LOOK—“...consider her ways...”



Having reviewed the ant in the previous chapter, it is now time to do some research. Or, as Solomon says, STOP—“go to the ant...” and LOOK—“consider her ways” (Proverbs 6:6). The Hebrew word we translate “consider” in this verse means “to look at intently, to inspect, to learn about, to do research upon.” This is not to be a passing whim or a cursory look. Instead, this is to be an intense project focused with a concentrated effort. Ironically, this same Hebrew word is used no less than eight times in the first chapter of Genesis to describe how the Creator God looked upon his creation at the end of each great creative act. Thus, we now turn our attention to considering the ways of the ant. She has so much to teach us along our journey to financial freedom in our retirement years.



What are we to “consider”? What is it as we go to the ant that we are to inspect, to give earnest thought to, to research as it were? Solomon is specific in his admonition as he tells us she “provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:8). Why? Because the ant is wise enough to know that winter is coming! Following the growing season and the harvest is coming a time when food will be hard to find, the earth will become frozen, snow will cover the ground. Realizing this, the ant makes adequate provision for that time of life. She stores up food when the sun is shining. She disciplines herself to gather her food and put it away for the winter season of life. This is something every minister of the gospel should “consider.” If this is good advice for an ant, how much better advice is it for those of us who are to provide for our own households?

We are all on a journey, passing through the seasons of life ourselves. Some of us who read these words are living in the springtime of life. We are young. We are just getting started. The



whole world is before us and it seems so filled with potential. For most in this season of life, little, if any thought, is given to the fact that winter is coming. It seems so distant and far away. And yet, those who are wise like the ant and begin preparing in this early season are the ones who take advantage of a thing called compound interest that makes the journey toward financial freedom so much more obtainable.

Some of us are living now in the summer season of life. We are growing, everything is green and life is good. We are not as young as we used to be and with the sun overhead we seem to be able to see things a little better and hold life in a somewhat clearer perspective. It is at this season that the ant in Solomon's analogy is busy gathering her supplies and storing them up for later. It is in this season that it is critical for us to be following her example along our own journey.

Some of us are living now in the fall season of life. The leaves are turning all around us. The nights are getting colder. Summer is gone. It is in this season of life when the children have grown



and gone to start families of their own and when our income is usually at its peak and our expenses are generally not as much as in previous years. This is the critical season in retirement planning when we maximize our contributions and take advantage of tax savings in doing so.

The winter season is coming for all of us. Too many of us get there before we realize it and, unlike the ant, have not stored up enough supplies for this season of life. No wonder Solomon admonishes us to “go to the ant... consider her ways...and be wise.” For those who make preparation, the winter season of life can be among our most productive seasons of ministry. The underlying motivation of these pages is found in the prayer and desire that those called into gospel ministry will learn these lessons in *Antology* so that they may live their later years in dignity free to go and serve Christ with financial freedom wherever and whenever He may lead them. It is with this passion that we “go to the ant...consider her ways...and be wise.”

Allow me to remind us all that the idea of

retiring from ministry should not be a large part of the pastor's thinking process. Who of us ever intends to "retire" from the ministry or the service of the Lord Jesus? Most of us are desirous of "retooling" for a fresh and new season of service. When we are speaking of making preparation for retirement we are speaking of "vocational retirement" from our church or place of service and not retirement from our calling and the ministry we have received from the Lord Himself.

Vocational retirement planning is like a three-legged stool. For most of us to have any hope of arriving at the destination of retirement with sufficient resources all three legs of the stool are necessary and all three must be sturdy. One leg of the stool is the provision that one day will come our way through Social Security benefits. The second leg is that which we will one day receive from our 403(b) or other retirement vehicles in which we have consistently "stored" money and watched it grow through the years of employment. The final leg of the stool of

financial freedom in retirement is the leg of our personal savings which we have disciplined ourselves across the years to put away. The wise pastor “considers the ant” and how she “provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest.” He realizes that all three legs of the retirement stool are not simply important but imperative if he is to live with any semblance of financial security and dignity in his declining years.

Most financial planners suggest that a retirement income goal should equal at least 75-80% of your pre-retirement income. This means that it is imperative that the pastor begins early on in his career to “go to the ant...consider her ways...and be wise” by laying aside an amount each month for the latter years. There is a principle called “compound interest” which is virtually mandatory if you expect your retirement and savings to grow significantly across the years. By means of illustration, if a pastor begins to contribute \$50 per month to his retirement account at age 35 and does so until he is 65; he will

accumulate a balance of \$70,881. (For illustrative purposes this scenario assumes an 8% annual return.) But, note what happens if the same pastor starts just a little earlier. This same pastor starting at age 25 instead of 35, contributing the same \$50 per month, would have a nest egg of \$162,090 at age 65! And, note this additional almost \$100,000 is his with an investment of only an additional \$6,000 (\$50 per month for ten years). This is the beauty and dynamic of having your money working for you that we refer to as compound interest. Perhaps you are already well along in ministry and haven't gotten started yet. What matters is that you "go to the ant... consider her ways...and be wise" now and get started immediately.

The reality we are facing in our world today is that the three-legged stool mentioned above has some wobbly legs on it for the modern pastor. In too many cases they are beyond wobbly; they are broken. A stool needs all three legs to be strong and sturdy to hold us up. Have you ever tried to sit on a stool where one of the three legs



was broken? Or, have you ever tried to sit on a stool with only one leg? You spend your time teetering and tottering and trying to stay on the stool without falling completely off. The modern pastor is faced with a world in which all three legs of the retirement stool are in need of repair or they will soon be broken off completely.

Consider the leg of Social Security. This is a vital leg on the way to adequate security and retirement. And yet, for many pastors it has been removed from their stool. Some pastors have taken some unwise advice, in my opinion, and opted out of Social Security. Oh, when the decision was made they were sure they would be disciplined enough to invest the same amount of money in vehicles that would provide adequate death benefits, disability, health insurance and retirement products. But the reality is that few actually follow through on this and are left without the safety net Social Security provides.



Some may not realize that Social Security is far more than simply a supplement to our pension or retirement income. It includes a disability

provision and survivor benefits, not to mention Medicare when we reach age sixty-five. Without the leg of Social Security on the retirement stool the minister will have to save that much more every month in his retirement vehicle. Without this vital leg he will have to purchase additional survivor's insurance for his wife in the event of his death. Adequate additional life coverage will cost multiplied hundreds of dollars extra annually. And what about, God forbid, if the minister becomes disabled? Without the leg of Social Security he must purchase additional disability insurance. It is more likely that a minister will become disabled than that he will die before reaching retirement age. Beyond question, however, the most significant benefit provided by Social Security is Medicare and the benefits it brings to us in our retirement years. At this writing Medicare Part A costs approximately \$5,000 per year for the person who is not enrolled in Social Security. The coming health care costs for retirees not covered by Medicare promise to be staggering.

For those ministers who have opted out of Social Security, this leg of your retirement stool is broken. If you are not making disciplined provision for its replacement you are sitting on a very unstable future. Now might be the time to seek wise counsel and seek to reenter Social Security if and when the opportunity affords itself. Having said all this, it is a fact that the future of Social Security is at best uncertain. As Americans become older and the birth rate continues to decline a major challenge awaits the next generations just over the horizon.

The second leg of our retirement stool is that of our 403(b) or other retirement vehicle. For the average pastor this leg is a bit wobbly also. According to our research here at GuideStone, the average pastor's age is 49 and he pastors a church with less than 300 members. His church budget is \$81,000 annually. With an annual salary in the range of \$40,000 he is struggling to provide for and protect his family. His church is helping him with some of the cost of life and health coverage but he is also paying for a

portion of it. As a Southern Baptist he is fortunate to be in GuideStone's retirement plan. By virtue of this, he receives a survivor's benefit of \$50,000 at his age (\$100,000 for younger pastors) and a disability benefit of \$500 per month through the protection section of the Church Retirement Plan. These benefits are completely without cost to him and he may also receive matching funds from his state convention for his retirement account. At his age, 49, his retirement account averages around \$51,000. Thus, it is not hard to see that with only a few more years of paid service remaining he is going to have to stretch to build a portfolio that will meet his retirement needs.

With the first two legs already a bit wobbly and almost broken, what about the third leg of personal savings? I am sad to report this is the weakest leg on the stool. The U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that in 1985 the average American family saved 11.1% of their disposable income. Tragically, this year the average American family did not save a penny of their income in one year!

In fact, it is even worse than that—they went in the hole. The Bureau of Economic Analysis indicates a negative savings rate of minus 0.5% this past year. That is, we are spending more than we earn and dipping into savings or going in debt a little more to pay for our purchases and lifestyles. Our consumer-driven culture has fallen prey to slick advertising, shopping channels on television and impulse buying. It is as though we were on board ship sailing into the future without any protection or provision from the coming storm and the rough seas ahead. Incidentally, America's negative savings rate is at its lowest since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Is it any wonder King Solomon calls upon us to stop and go to the ant in order to observe what we can learn from her? Yes, to look and “consider her ways.” While others spend their time on leisure activities she is busy at work making preparation for the coming winter. She “stores her supplies in summer and gathers her food in the harvest.” If that is good advice for an



ant, it is even better advice for those called into gospel ministry.

It is never too late for a new beginning. You can start shoring up the three legs of your retirement stool now. Make sure you are fully versed on the benefits of Social Security and what it can mean to your financial future. Begin now to do your best to maximize your retirement account. The minister can take advantage of tax savings by doing this with pre-tax dollars. It is wise and right. And by all means, begin the discipline of saving a portion of your income monthly. If you are in debt, get out of debt. How? Stop spending more than you make. It may mean selling some of your possessions. Perform some plastic surgery on your credit cards. Debt can have a detrimental and devastating effect not only on our finances but on our witness and our ministry. Consolidate your debts as best you can. Find a local banker or financial planner and don't be afraid to ask for help. Many speak of practicing the 10/10/80 approach to building the savings leg of the retirement stool. That

is, return the tithe to the Lord through His church first, then put 10% of your paycheck in a savings vehicle, and finally, live on the other 80%. While on the surface this may appear for some to be impossible, those who practice it find amazing success.



Remember, in most cases, it will be to your advantage to maximize your contributions to your 403(b) account and then put money in other personal savings accounts.

Now that we have “gone to the ant” in part one by way of review to see what it is about these little pesky creatures that we can observe and from whom we can learn so many valuable life lessons...and now that we have “considered her ways” and seen the vital necessity of storing up provisions in our income-earning years for those days when we live in the winter season of life...it is time now to “be wise,” as Solomon puts it and learn to apply these principles to our lives for our own good and God’s glory. So, let’s turn the page to part three as we complete the journey and as we stop and go to the ant, look

to consider her ways and, finally, listen in order
to be wise.

PART THREE:

LISTEN—“...and be wise”



In my position at GuideStone Financial Resources I have the privilege of working with and encouraging thousands of pastors with their retirement needs. Unfortunately, this is a subject that many of them do not put high enough on their “to do” list in their younger years. Too many of us wait until it is almost too late to start preparing for the years of vocational retirement which lie ahead. Most pastors I know are underpaid and overworked. They spend long hours in pastoral ministry and many of them simply do not think they have the money or expertise to give to this important life issue. This is all the more reason this little volume is calling us to STOP, LOOK, LISTEN; to “go to the ant...consider her ways...and be wise.”

As I type these words my mind is racing

back to that old railroad crossing not far from my childhood home. In my mind's eye I can still see that old sign in flaming red block letters—STOP...LOOK...LISTEN. This three-fold warning reminded me to come to a stop before crossing the tracks. When stopped, it reminded me to look carefully both ways down the tracks as far as I could. But that is not all. It also reminded me to listen and see if I could hear a train whistle, which would indicate the train was bearing down on the intersection. My dad would often warn me that it was not enough to simply stop and look but I was to listen keenly for that whistle as a speeding train could turn the corner and bear down on you before you really realized it.

Again, this is basically what this little volume you hold in your hand is calling you to do. First, it is calling on you to STOP. That is, “go to the ant.” Some of life's greatest lessons are in the simple things and are usually right under our nose if we stop long enough to observe them. Secondly, it is calling you to LOOK. That is, “...

consider her ways..." It is not enough to stop, if you do not look intently upon these life lessons and "consider" them. Finally, this volume is a clarion call to LISTEN. That is, to "...be wise."



It is of little use to go to the ant and consider her ways if you do not apply her lessons to your own life and be wise in doing so. Thus, since we have "stopped" in chapter one and "looked" in chapter two, let's hasten on to "listen" to what the Lord, through Solomon, is trying to tell us in this final brief chapter.

The wise man realizes that retirement planning is like running a marathon. Some seem to view it as some kind of a sprint like a 100-meter dash. But it is not something that can be accomplished in a flash of the moment. It is not a middle distance track event like the 800-meter run or the mile run. It is not a field event like the long jump or the high jump. It cannot be obtained in one fell swoop or leap. It is a marathon covering many miles and a long time.

Successful marathon runners know there are four stages to the race. Initially, you must get off



to a good start. Next, you must set a constant pace over most of the route. Then, you must pick up the pace as you get nearer the end. Runners call this the “kick.” Finally, you must sprint the last few yards to the finish line. The wise pastor en route to a financially successful retirement incorporates all four of these stages along his own way to vocational retirement.

The most important thing in running a marathon is to get off to a good start. If you lag back or get too far behind the crowd in the beginning you must spend a lot of extra energy breaking through the mass of men and women ahead of you in order to position yourself and set your pace for the race. Getting out of the starting blocks early and quickly is vitally important. Retirement planning is the same way. It demands that we get started right and early on in the ministry we have received from the Lord. The wise seminary student and first-time pastor who goes to the ant to consider her ways realizes this. For example, a thirty-year-old pastor may need to contribute an amount equal to 6% of his



pay to receive a retirement benefit equal to 50% of his final annual salary at age 65. However, if that same pastor waited just ten years to begin contributing to his retirement account he would need to contribute 11% of his pay until he was 65 years of age to receive the same 50% benefit. This illustrates the principle of compound interest and the necessity of a good start to retirement planning.

The next step in running a successful marathon is the stage in which the runner sets a consistent pace that he will maintain over the great majority of the race. Here he finds his “zone” and the great part of the race is run at this consistent pace. He gets in his “groove” and runs this way for miles and miles and miles. The same principle applies to successful retirement planning. Once we have determined our risk tolerance and time horizon, we factor in our asset allocation and “set our pace” for years, trusting it to work over time in our behalf as we make regular monthly contributions along the way. Like the marathon runner experiences in every race, there will be

hills and valleys on the route of our financial landscape. However, once the wise pastor has determined the necessary factors above, he sets his pace and devotes his energies and efforts to the ministry to which God calls him.

The third stage in marathon running is when we get near the end of the race. After getting off to a good start and running for miles at our set pace, we pick it up when we get near the end. This phase of the race is called the “kick.” And so it is with our own retirement planning. Once our children are grown and gone and we have more disposable income, we begin to maximize our retirement contributions. Here we “kick” in additional monies in order to take advantage of tax savings and in some cases even deferred compensation.

Finally, after the long and disciplined race we come to the end, the finish line. And right before we get there, we give it all we have left. We sprint toward the tape. We seek to finish strong so that we do not come stumbling and falling across the finish line. For the pastor whom God



calls to ministry, finishing strong is important to our gospel witness. The pastor who has gotten a good start in his retirement preparation, maintained a constant pace of contributions across the years and has maximized his efforts in his latter years can sprint across the finish line knowing he has wisely obtained some measure of financial security. He has the satisfaction of now knowing he will be able to spend his remaining years volunteering on mission whenever and wherever God may lead him as he “retools” for ministry in retirement.

For those who have traveled through the journey of these pages thus far and are seeking wisdom in considering now this vital stewardship of your future, there may be some adjusting that needs to be made. For those who have not gotten a good start it means that you must now run the race over the years with a little stronger pace by contributing a little more each month into your retirement account. For those along the way who have lagged behind in the middle of the race and not kept up your

pace, it may mean that in the latter stages of the retirement race you will have to “kick” in more than anticipated and sprint a little farther to the finish line. What is important is to get started wherever you are along the journey. This is wise and this is right.

For 75-year-old E. J. Hines, retirement has been a definite blessing. Here is a man who ran each stage of the retirement marathon with wisdom. A career-long GuideStone retirement plan participant, Hines can say something many other retirees, secular or ministry-oriented, cannot say. Thanks to getting off to a good start, setting a consistent pace through the years and finishing strong, Hines is making more money in retirement than he did in his last assignment of ministry before he retired as a Director of Missions on the North Carolina coast.

“My second pastorate began March 6, 1960, and that was my formal introduction to what was then The Annuity Board and is now GuideStone Financial Resources,” Hines said. “Pastors and preachers in Southern Baptist life do not get




paid a lot. As soon as I could, and all along the way, I asked the church to increase the amount contributed to my account.”

Hine’s ministry, spanning an amazing 41 years with New River Baptist Association, included founding the association of churches itself. After coming to pastor Calvary Baptist Church in Jacksonville, North Carolina, he discovered that local pastors were a great distance from the adjoining associations. One year after the birth of the new association he was called as its leader.

New River Association is an important ministry point, especially to the nearby Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base. More than 50,000 active duty Marines and Sailors are stationed at the camp, along with another 30,000 dependents. Add to this the 25,000 or so retired military personnel who also live there and Hines says those 100,000-plus people attached to the military in some form provide an incredible ministry opportunity for the association and its churches.

Almost immediately after creating the association, Hines led in the purchasing of a

ministry center right next to the bus station where hundreds of these young men and women come into the area. “We called it the Welcome Inn and it was a great ministry opportunity,” he said.

In the midst of the busyness of founding, building and growing the New River Association, Hines did not neglect the responsibility of taking care of his own finances. He saw it as his stewardship and an act of discipline and even worship. During those decades Hines set his pace and continued to increase his contributions along the way. 

Then, he says, “During the last fifteen years I began to intensify those efforts.” Those efforts were enhanced by his wife’s return to work in her later years, which allowed them to contribute even more to their retirement savings. “GuideStone has provided an education for me,” he said, adding that through the years the GuideStone representatives have always helped him along the way.

Hines finished his race with a sprint with no feelings that he left any of his work

unfinished. His tenure, the longest in North Carolina history, ended after over four decades of faithful service.

Retirement for Hines has been quite busy. Not given to days off and vacation, today he is often found offering advice to young ministers who will need to retire one day themselves. He went to the ant early on in his ministry. He considered her ways. And the result? He has been a wise steward and is enjoying his days of “retooling” rather than retiring. “GuideStone has the best thing going,” he concludes.

At GuideStone our new MyDestination Funds have been designed with the busy pastor in mind. The average pastor does not want to worry with his asset allocation, nor his time horizon, nor any of the other financial matters in which he may not have expertise. This new investment choice enables you to simply choose one fund that is nearest your expected retirement date. Each of these date targeted funds is a “fund-of-funds” with a diversified asset allocation that gradually grows more conservative as you get nearer your

retirement date. Thus, your portfolio is more aggressive in your younger years when your time horizon allows for a bit more in equity risks and more conservative in your latter years when you seek to preserve your corpus for retirement. MyDestination Funds have been launched with the pastor or participant in mind who is looking for a simple solution and one-stop investing, who desires professional management with automatic asset rebalancing and who wants a diversified portfolio that gradually adjusts as your retirement date gets closer. For more information on this go to our website at *www.GuideStone.org*.

It should be noted carefully that with the emphasis on saving money in this volume we are not talking about hoarding our assets. James warned about those who “heaped up treasure in the last days” (James 5:3). One has to do with a Biblical attitude, the other with biased actions. It is wise to “go to the ant” and save to prepare for the winter season of life. It is sinful to get all we can and “can all we get”

by hoarding it all up for ourselves. When we begin to guard our money in such a way that we begin to love it, then what was meant to bless us becomes a curse to us.

It is a mistake to think that our source, or our security, for that matter, is found in guarded wealth. Wealth can become of all things most deceptive and at times even decadent. God is as concerned with our attitude in how we guard our wealth as He is with how we get it and how we give it.

I think James said that some had heaped up wealth for “the last days” because all accounts are not in yet and our judgment awaits Christ’s return. One day, everything we have will be in someone else’s possession. Our influence for good or bad will continue after we are gone.

The problem is not in possessing savings or money but in allowing it to possess us! Money is not the root of all evil. It is “the love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10) that is at this root. Money in the hands of a good steward who recognizes that God Himself “owns the cattle on a thousand

hills" (Psalm 50:10) can do great things for the kingdom here on earth even after we are long in heaven. Your Last Will and Testament is your last "testimony." It will be read at the end of your life and will reveal what was really important to you as you walked the ways of this world.

Those who "go to the ant...consider her ways...and are wise" are the ones who are motivated by love for the Lord and kingdom service in their retirement years and even afterwards when they are in heaven. God honors wise preparation in the hands of wise stewards.

Our journey to the anthill is almost complete and will be after a few words of conclusion in the next section. Among the many traits we learn from the ant is that he is tenacious. He never quits. He keeps on going. He keeps on building. He keeps on overcoming the obstacles that come his way. He keeps on storing his resources. If we will take him seriously, consider his ways and be wise in running our own race to financial

freedom, we too will cross the finish line ready to “retool” for new adventures in ministry rather than simply “retiring” to a life of leisure.



CONCLUSION



Having stopped for a while to “go to the ant,” having looked as we have “considered her ways” and, finally, having listened so that we have hopefully become “wise,” we now come to the conclusion of the matter.

At GuideStone Financial Resources it is our sacred responsibility and joy to be not only stewards, but also advocates for scores of thousands of faithful pastors and God-called church workers. Many of these men and women are struggling to meet their basic needs month by month and find it difficult and challenging, to say the least, to make adequate preparation for the coming winter season of life. We are calling upon local churches to take responsibility for the minister’s care. This is not only right; it is Biblical. The Apostle Paul addressed this very issue in several of his epistles to the churches.



To the Corinthians he wrote, "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). To the Galatians he admonished to "let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). It is interesting to note the apostle's divinely inspired choice of words in these verses. He says the Lord "commands" this. He also says those who are the recipients of Biblical truth "must" share with the teacher. In one of his final letters he says to young Timothy, "The elders who rule will be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17). With these words in mind, those in places of leadership in the church should adequately compensate their staff and families who "labor" in the word and doctrine.

We at GuideStone want to be a lifelong partner with you along the journey to your retirement years. Our passion is to help the next couple of generations reach that destination with financial security and dignity. As mentioned

earlier, many of them will live another twenty to twenty-five years of active, healthy life after vocational retirement. We have before us the greatest opportunity of flooding our world with more volunteers on mission than we could ever imagine. I am convinced the greatest years of ministry for many of us will come after our own “vocational retirement.”

Many in the Bible made their greatest contributions to the Kingdom in their later years and long after what we think of as our retirement years. Abraham became heir to God’s covenant and promises when he was already an older man. He didn’t even “get started” until late in life. Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea and through decades in the wilderness when most his age would have been taking it easy if possible. Simeon was an old man still serving in the Temple when he took the baby Jesus into his arms, and into his heart. And, what about John? He was over ninety and still serving Christ while exiled to Patmos. And then came perhaps his greatest contribution. While



there on Patmos, as an old man, he gave us the God-inspired writings of the Apocalypse. Yes, the best is yet to come for all of us.

As we now conclude this journey, we take one final trip back to the old railroad crossing. We have all heard the horror stories of those who fail to STOP at railroad crossings and thinking they can beat the train through the intersection end up with a major collision that can be damaging at best. Some journey through life like this. That is, they run from one near miss to another; from one wreck to another. They never stop long enough to learn some of the valuable life lessons that are found in simple things like ants, for example.

Then, we have heard of those who stop at the crossings but do not look both ways and blindly move forward and never know what hit them. There are those who plan for retirement like this. They stop long enough along the way and observe these warnings and lessons. However, they do not really look at them enough to “consider” their own plight if they do not “store

their food in summer and gather it in harvest” for the coming winter. Procrastination is one of the vilest enemies to successful retirement planning.

Finally, we have all heard of accidents caused by those who, even though they stop and look, they do not listen for the whistle of what might be bearing down on them just around the corner. They think the train is a long way off. There are a lot of God-called ministers today who think retirement is a long way off and nothing to really give serious thought to until they are older. In reality, it is bearing down on all of us and will be



here sooner than we realize.

STOP-LOOK-LISTEN. Those three words are not just good advice for train crossings but for us as we heed Solomon’s advice and “go to the ant...consider her ways...and be wise.” Solomon reminds us that wisdom comes in observing the ant’s obvious object lesson for us. The ant does not simply live for the current moment but lives in anticipation of future needs. She gathers and stores her food in summer while it is warm and

she does so long before winter comes. Pastor, this little volume is a clarion call for you to “go to the ant and be wise” as it relates to your own retirement preparation. You may feel the newness of spring, the warmth of summer or for some of you even the coolness of fall now, but winter is coming. Instead of thinking about “retiring,” go to the ant and be wise and think about “retooling” for your greatest years of ministry. *God is not through with you yet!*



HOW TO GET STARTED IN A GUIDESTONE RETIREMENT PLAN



[STEP 1]

Determine which retirement plan is right for you.

- ✦ There are retirement plans for ministers and employees of churches.
- ✦ There are also retirement plans for ministers and employees of other types of ministries.

YOU CAN FIND INFORMATION ONLINE AT
www.GuideStone.org or you can call
1-888-98-GUIDE to determine which
plan is right for you.

[STEP 2]

Let us help you decide how much you and/or your church will contribute to the retirement plan.

[STEP 3]

Complete an enrollment application online or call 1-888-98-GUIDE to request an enrollment kit.

[OR]



JUST CALL 1-888-98-GUIDE

to speak with a Customer Service specialist.

They are ready to take your call and help you enroll
in a GuideStone retirement plan.



TIME AND COMPOUND INTEREST WORK HAND-IN-HAND



How can a few dollars a month grow into a sizable account balance at retirement? Thanks to the powerful combination of time and compounding, even a little can do a lot.

Ask a financial planner to name a wonder in the universe and he might say compounding. Compounding may not rate that type of hype, but it is an amazing phenomenon in the investing landscape and one that can work for you.

Compounding is the earnings on both your original investment and any interest and dividends your investment earns. The earlier in your career you start saving for retirement, the more compounding can benefit you. But don't despair if you're near retirement. Starting late

is better than not saving at all. Compounding still works, even over the short term, especially in tax-deferred programs like GuideStone's retirement plans.

THREE TIMES THE BENEFIT

Compounding in tax-deferred plans has a triple effect: you get the growth of your contribution, the growth of those earnings and the growth of the money that otherwise would have been taken out for taxes.

Since taxes are deferred on your retirement portfolio, your investments grow faster than they would if they were in a taxable account. All your earnings are reinvested without being reduced by current income taxes. The result is that interest income and dividend reinvestments keep compounding, and your portfolio's growth accelerates over time.

THE EARLY BIRDS BENEFIT

The earlier you start, the more time your money has to grow. And your contribution

can be relatively small at first. For example, if you have 20 to 30 years before retirement and contribute regularly to your tax-deferred saving plan account, compound growth may provide up to half or even more of your total account balance at retirement. Because you'll actually need to save less over a working lifetime, you'll have more disposable income for your current lifestyle. If you start contributing a small amount early in your career, try to build up over time to the maximum allowed. When you retire, you'll probably thank yourself for starting early and sticking with your program.

A good example of the benefits of compounding can be illustrated with Jennifer and John, who have similar financial goals. Jennifer starts investing at age 25 and invests \$2,000 each year until age 35. Then she stops investing. John waits until age 35 and invests \$2,000 a year until age 65. Between ages 35 and 65, both Jennifer and John see significant growth in their investments – even though John is the only one

continuing to contribute to his account. Who do you think will have more money at age 65?

*It is Jennifer who invested only \$20,000 over 10 years. She will have \$314,870. John – who invested \$60,000 over 30 years – will have \$244,692. That’s just 78% of Jennifer’s nest egg.**

Why the difference? By starting earlier, Jennifer enjoyed a much bigger boost from compounding. And, if Jennifer had continued to contribute \$2,000 a year until age 65, she would have had \$559,562!

BUT . . . IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO START

Don’t procrastinate any longer. Even if retirement is within reach – say 10 to 15 years or so – compounding still works. You’ll likely have to contribute more per month to reach your goals than someone who starts earlier, or you may consider retiring at a later age.

NO INTERRUPTIONS, PLEASE

Remember, time is money. When you borrow from your account or stop contributions for

awhile, the consequences can be costly. A loan reduces the amount you have invested in your account and may slow down the compounding process. Suspending contributions also slows momentum in the compounding process. Your retirement plan is your security for the future. Keep up on your contributions and you'll have a better chance of being covered at retirement.

** The example assumes Jennifer and John will earn an investment return of 8% a year after expenses.*

1% CLUB



Join GuideStone's 1% Club to lower your taxes now and raise the potential amount of your future retirement income.

Financial planners suggest you make a personal contribution to your retirement plan each year equal to 10% of your salary. This should be in addition to any amount your employer may provide. However, making the recommended 10% personal contribution may be too hard to do all at once.

The 1% Club makes it easy. You start by contributing at least 1% of your salary now. Then as a club member you will receive a Salary Reduction Agreement every year and a reminder when it's time to increase your contribution by 1% or more. Over the next five years you can

increase contributions by 5% one small step at a time or even go beyond your goal if you choose.

As a 1% Club member, our Customer Relations specialists will help you fill out the necessary forms and give you a personalized review of your retirement plan participation.

Join the 1% Club by enrolling online or contact us at **1-888-98-GUIDE** (1-888-984-8433).

SOCIAL SECURITY AND YOUR RETIREMENT PLANNING



Q. Will Social Security be enough for me to live on in retirement?

A. *It depends. If you are already retired and are comfortable with your income flow from Social Security and other sources, you are probably okay. However, if you are younger, say age 40, you may have reason for concern. For example, the Social Security Trustees create an annual report each year with cost and income estimates, including: an optimistic low-cost estimate, an intermediate-cost estimate, and a high-cost estimate. If one assumes the high-cost estimate, a 40-year-old could expect a 31% cut in Social Security benefits!*¹

Q. How much of my pre-retirement income will Social Security replace in my retirement years?

A. *Again, it depends. According to the 2004 RETIRE Project Report from Georgia State University², a \$70,000 household needs to replace 80% of pre-retirement income, and Social Security will replace 39%, requiring 41% from personal savings. This is a concern since the Social Security Administration estimates approximately 65% of people age 65 or older receive at least half of their income from Social Security.*

Q. What other sources exist beyond Social Security to help me save for retirement?

A. *Think of retirement savings as a three-legged stool. One leg represents Social Security. The second leg represents your employer-sponsored retirement plan and the third leg represents personal savings. It is the second and third legs over which you have the most control.*

Q. What can I do to improve my chances of having more in the retirement years?

A. *Start by reviewing what you are setting aside in your retirement account. When was the last time you increased this amount? Remember, the amount you have reduced from your salary lowers your current taxable income. The amount you have invested in your retirement account then grows tax deferred until you begin drawing the funds out in retirement. The earlier you start and the more you contribute to the account, the greater the chance you will have more in retirement and are less dependent on Social Security.*

Q. What if I am already contributing the maximum allowable amount to my retirement account?

A. *You have the options of opening a Traditional or Roth IRA (depending on your income level). Also, you can open a Personal*

Investment Account as an additional vehicle to invest in for the future.

Q. If I have opted out of Social Security, can I get back in?

A. *In the past the IRS has provided windows of opportunity in which a minister who had opted out of Social Security could opt back in to Social Security. While there is not a window of opportunity at the writing of this book, a minister who wishes to re-enter Social Security should watch for any future opportunities that the IRS may make available.*

¹ Source: Dallas Morning News, "Worst case for Social Security" by Scott Burns, Feb. 9, 2005.

² Source: Dallas Morning News, "Politics and your future" by Scott Burns, Feb. 23, 2005.

BENEFITS OF MAXIMIZING YOUR RETIREMENT PLAN CONTRIBUTION



The importance of setting money aside for the future is not in question. In fact, most experts agree that 10–15% of your salary should be saved for retirement. If you started late or need to catch up for some other reason, you might need to put in additional money.

At GuideStone, we have many options available that can help you start or continue preparing for retirement. We make available Personal Investment Accounts, IRAs, Roth IRAs, Rollover IRAs and employer-sponsored retirement plans, such as 403(b) and 401(k). Each retirement and investment vehicle has attributes that are unique and potentially beneficial, but the employer-sponsored retire-

ment plans offer some special provisions that could help meet your needs.

The IRS allows you to contribute a larger amount of your salary to the retirement account as compared to IRAs or Roth IRAs. In fact, you have the potential to contribute more than three times as much to a 403(b) or 401(k) as compared to an IRA or Roth IRA. This can have a substantial impact over time as the savings in the retirement account compound without the effect of taxes.

In addition, contributions to a 403(b) or 401(k) are reduced from your gross wages before federal income tax is assessed. (Contributions by ministers are also excluded from SECA tax.) Maximizing your retirement contributions could decrease your overall taxes due or even put you in a lower tax bracket. For specifics regarding the effects this would have in your situation, please consult a tax adviser.

GuideStone is committed to helping you achieve your retirement goals. If you have questions about your maximum allowable contri-

bution limit please call us at **1-888-98-GUIDE**. We have individuals available to help you define your personal contribution limit and increase your salary-reduced contributions to your retirement account.

ABOUT GUIDESTONE FINANCIAL RESOURCES



Dallas-based GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention is a leading financial services provider of retirement, investment and life and health plans. Operating as a church benefits board, the multi-billion dollar organization is dedicated to providing outstanding products and high-touch customer service to Southern Baptist and other evangelical churches, ministries and institutions.

GuideStone offers a wide array of retirement services including retirement and executive compensation plans, personal and institutional investment products and recordkeeping services. Christian-based, socially screened investment programs utilize a sophisticated manager-of-managers philosophy.

Life and Health products made available through GuideStone include a variety of term life, accident, disability, medical and dental plans with a wide range of benefit options.

Founded in 1918 as a relief organization, GuideStone continues its tradition of providing financial assistance to retired Southern Baptist ministers and ministers' widows with insufficient retirement income. For more information about GuideStone's products, services and endowment opportunities, visit *www.GuideStone.org* or call toll-free at **1-888-98-GUIDE**.

Antology

Lessons from the ant for our own financial future



Antology. What on earth is this and what does it have to do with the issue of retirement? Solomon addressed this subject in a unique way in the writing of his Proverbs when he challenged us to, *“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise. Which, having no captain or overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.”* (Proverbs 6:6-8). The ant “stores” her provisions in the summer and “gathers” her provisions in harvest for a very important reason. Winter is coming! And with it will surely come the need for added provisions that are not readily obtainable. Storing financial resources in our productive income-producing years, that is—during the summer and fall seasons of life—is smart and logical. And, as Solomon reveals, it is also Biblical. If this is good advice for an ant, it is good advice for those who are active in serving in gospel ministry.



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