

10 Diagnostic Questions To Help Determine:

At What Age Should A Pastor Retire?



by **Thom S. Rainer**

There are a lot of us Baby Boomer pastors and Christian leaders around. And it’s cliché, but we aren’t getting any younger. It’s a quiet question that many are asking, but they are asking it nonetheless: What age should I retire?

Instead of responding with a specific number, I ask my Baby Boomer peers a series of ten diagnostic questions:

1. **Are you physically and emotionally able to continue to lead at a high level?** If not, you probably should retire.
2. **Are you still highly motivated in your place of leadership?** If you don’t wake up each morning excited about your ministry, you might consider stepping down.
3. **Are you a continuous learner?** Are you reading, listening to others, attending conferences, learning new technologies, and staying current in key areas?

4. **Are you hanging on primarily for financial reasons?** If that is your dominant reason for staying, you are doing your church or ministry a disservice by staying.
5. **Do you have a clear and compelling vision for your ministry's future?** If not, you may be coasting and ready to retire.
6. **Is the church's health deteriorating under your leadership?** It's not always the fault of the pastor, but you need to ask if new leadership could bring new life.
7. **Does the word "change" cause you to feel threatened or angry?** If you are not happy with the way the current generation is leading churches, you may be too change resistant to lead your own church.
8. **Do you empower others regularly?** If you are not taking time to equip others to do the work of ministry and to become leaders, it could be an indicator you are coasting.
9. **Is your family supportive of you staying in your current ministry position?** Your spouse or children may really know what's best for you and the church, and it may be retirement.
10. **Do you find yourself longing for the good old days?** If so, you might be living in the past, ineffective in the present, and unable to lead toward the future. It might be time to step down.

I know. You never retire from ministry. I know. Our current president was inaugurated when he was almost 71 years old. Those facts do not change the reality that it might be time for some pastors to retire now and find other ways to serve.

So, at what age should a pastor retire? It really depends. Every situation is unique. You may have many years left in your current church.

Or you may need to retire now and allow new leadership an opportunity to take the church to a new level.

Be honest with yourself. Above all, be honest with God.

If it is truly time for you to retire from your church, He will be with you just as He has throughout your entire ministry.