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Foreword

DR. KOENIG is a remarkable and intelligent doctor and professor of medicine who specializes in trying to help the rapidly growing number of people who are moving from middle age into their later years, who are either retired or who are considering retirement. This helpful book raises the question of whether idleness leads to the production of goods and discoveries and happiness, or whether it produces the opposite. If you have observed large numbers of people over age sixty-five, do you find that those who are idle are healthier and more satisfied, or do you find that they tend to decline more rapidly in body and mind, as well as in happiness and self-esteem?

Furthermore, is it sensible to think that the vast cosmos was created for the purpose of producing happiness for a single species on one little planet? Humans have not yet discovered any other species anywhere with the ability to plan for progress and for the expansion of information. Does this raise the question of whether we may have been created to serve as helpers in the acceleration of divine creativity?

Do these observations imply that creativity can bring more benefits and more happiness than can idleness? Before the twentieth century, it was customary all over the world for people to work as long as they were able. It was rare for a person to change from being a producer to being a parasite on a nation's resources. The idea that a nation or an employer should provide a pension was almost unknown.

Recently, a major nation established a police force to prevent any person from holding employment after age fifty-five and to prevent any person from being employed over thirty-five hours weekly. What do you think will happen to the productivity of that nation? Will the younger and more industrious people want to leave? Instead of forcing idleness, would it not be more helpful to give incentives for more work, for inventions, and for entrepreneurship?

In America, when Franklin Roosevelt was president, the first national Social Security system was adopted; it set the retirement age at sixty-five. At the time sixty-five was the average life expectancy; therefore, only about half the people would live to collect Social Security. The total cost of the program was reasonable. The increasing burden of paying for Social Security today could have been avoided if the retirement age had been made adjustable for changes in average life expectancy. Today such a change would not likely gain a majority of votes in Congress. However, quite possibly a majority of votes would favor a proposal to place no income tax on the earnings of people who work beyond age sixty-five. That would be a blessing not only for individuals but also for the national economy.

Recently, more Americans have begun to advocate that after age sixty-five a person should become active as a volunteer for a church or a charity. Already America leads the world in volunteering and millions of people are productive and happier because they have volunteered. However, when you think about it, would it not also be wise to begin helping teenagers to plan their careers so that they could be beneficial and productive until they are disabled? In many careers, people can remain productive until age seventy-five or eighty-five.

Of course, there are some careers where it would be necessary to plan ahead for a different career. For example, a great surgeon whose hands begin to tremble might have prepared in

advance to be a teacher, lecturer, or researcher. Similarly, some of us would prefer not to fly in an airplane whose pilot was over seventy-five; but in this case as well, through conscious planning a pilot could prepare him or herself for a later career.

In addition, rather than planning to live on government handouts, perhaps most young people could be taught to create a diversified investment plan for unexpected emergencies. While planning for a beneficial and happy career after age sixty-five, most people could also begin at age twenty-five to build a diversified portfolio of assets, which would enable them to finance new enterprises and charities as long as they live.

I hope that many schools and universities and churches and employers will want to provide encouragement and education so that almost everyone will make a wise plan for later life. Textbooks can reveal the glorious lives of old benefactors. At age eighty-nine I am busier than ever, more enthusiastic and joyful than ever, because I am working on dozens of programs to help humanity gain more spiritual wealth. If you want such joy and enthusiasm too, then continue reading.

SIR JOHN TEMPLETON

PURPOSE AND POWER
IN RETIREMENT

Introduction

“Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.” —Helen Keller

SITTING IN MY BACKYARD one Saturday morning, I was deep in thought. It was a couple of days after my fiftieth birthday. I had just received a letter in the mail from the American Association of Retired Persons. It both shocked me and ticked me off. But it started me thinking. What will I do with my time when I retire? That decision will affect the quality of the rest of my life. I'd really like to put the decision off for a while. If I wait, though, inaction now will also have an impact on my future. I've heard that when people retire, their time quickly fills up with activities. I'm afraid that the meaning of my final years could be lost—a huge opportunity missed or at least not fully realized.

Since I'm only going to live once and this is my last chance, I don't want to miss the real purpose of why I'm here—especially why I'm here in this place and at this time. I believe my life has a purpose and that my Christian faith has something to do with it. I don't believe that I am simply the result of random forces or impersonal chance in a merciless universe intent on snuffing me out and returning me to the atoms and molecules from whence I came. If there is a purpose to my life, then I'm determined not to allow anything to stand in the way of that

purpose—especially my lack of knowledge of options and consequences. I want to be prepared so that when I leave my job in a few years, I will know where I’m headed in the next phase of my life. After all, that phase may last another twenty-five or thirty years. I’m going to start my planning early.

I wonder if my friends and colleagues are also thinking about this issue. What will they do when they retire? This isn’t something you typically talk about during work or social conversations, but it must be on their minds, especially if they are anywhere between the ages of fifty and sixty. I suspect that after they leave the workplace, many will understandably choose a life of leisure, self-enjoyment, and recreation within the limits of their health and finances. I certainly don’t blame them. They have worked hard for many years, sacrificing time and pleasure to support their families and perhaps to accumulate a little nest egg to kick back on. It certainly seems like that’s what everybody is doing. Maybe I should do that, too.

I wish I could simply plan to do that and stop worrying about it. But there is that persistent, nagging thought: *I want more out of life*. I want to continue to make a difference in the world. As Kay Whitmore said, “Making a difference is not easy. But the price of indifference is too great not to try.” Are there any better options than simply stepping aside and focusing on leisure, trying to stay busy to keep from getting bored?

I know that I’m not alone with these struggles. Consider the following people:

- ◆ John had his fifty-fifth birthday last month. He has been thinking a lot lately about what he will do when he leaves the job he’s been at for the past thirty years. Should he seek early retirement in a couple of years or go the distance to age sixty-five? That time seems to be approaching faster and faster, much faster than he ever dreamed. John

enjoys his work, which has given him much personal fulfillment. Most of his friends are also from his job. Work structures his entire week. How will he spend his time when he doesn't have to be at the office every morning?

- ◆ Josie, age sixty-seven, is widowed and living by herself in an apartment. Her arthritis has limited her activities over the past few years. She has two children with families who live nearby, but they are consumed with their own jobs and kids and are not able to include her as often as she would like them to. She spends a lot of time at home, worrying about her health, watching television, and feeling lonely.
- ◆ Jim just turned sixty-six. He retired last year from a position in a lumber company where he had operated heavy machinery for nearly four decades. Jim worked hard physically for many years, taking orders from his supervisors and dutifully carrying them out. Despite being a devoted employee, he never really liked the work and often dreamed of starting his own business and being his own boss some day. But it never happened. Through the years, he consoled himself with the thought that if he worked hard and handled his money right, he would eventually be able to leave his job and enjoy some fun and travel. During the past year Jim and his wife traveled around the United States and even took a trip to Europe for two weeks. For the last several months, however, he has begun to grow bored, wondering if this is all there is to life.
- ◆ Joan has been employed at the telephone company for the past twenty-five years. Because of downsizing and budget cuts, she recently learned that her boss wants her to retire in six months when she reaches age sixty. All of her children are raised and out of the house, and her husband is still busy managing his business. She wonders what she will do after she leaves her job.