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Noel Swain: Start saving for Retirement early so you so you don't have to die poor

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Several months ago, I contracted the COVID-19 virus and was very sick for several

weeks. Since that time I have had some ongoing vertigo. So, a few weeks ago I was referred to an ear, nose and throat doctor to see if my ongoing issue was inner ear-related.

After all the tests were complete the doctor told me I need to strengthen my core muscles to regain my balance. He said I should join a gym and hire a personal trainer, and work out three times a week. That was terrible news for me. If it had been my inner ear, he could have prescribed a pill to take and my life could have gone on as before. But having to exercise? That means I have to change my bad habit of avoiding exercise. I have to get in shape. Now don't get me wrong. I want to be in shape. I just don't want to do the things that are necessary to make that happen.

Isn't that the way we all are? We all want to be in terrific shape, to be healthy, to be financially independent, to have true love in our lives. But we don't want to change any of our bad habits to attain those things. We want them for free!

It's not fair, I tell you. It's just not fair. You start out in life and develop bad actions. You eat food that tastes good, but may not be very good for you. You try smoking. You drink at parties, and sometimes too much. But your body forgives you. You stay slender. Your heart and lungs still work great. Your body metabolizes well all the bad stuff you throw at it until you've turned those bad actions into bad habits. Then your body starts throwing you curve balls. You

have a mild heart attack. You develop a spot on a lung. You gain weight and develop diabetes. You get winded much faster than you used to. Your bad habits have turned you into a weak and sick person. You're told you can regain your health by foregoing fried food, eliminating sugar from your diet, quitting smoking, and giving up alcohol. But it's much easier said than done.

In your financial life, you've always spent everything you made. You say you'd save money if you made more. But every time you have gotten a raise at work you found you "needed" it for something else. You "needed" that new car with the higher payments because the other one "would soon start giving you trouble." The kids "needed" those new \$100 sneakers because "all the other kids have them." As time went by you never did participate in your 401-k at work. You couldn't. There was never any money left over.

You didn't know that your habits were dictating your behavior. So now the kids are gone, you're 55, you feel bad most of the time and you still live paycheck to paycheck. You never realized that if you had just developed the good habits of eating right, exercising, not smoking or drinking, and putting 10% of your pay away in a retirement account of some type back when you were young, you would have found a way to live on the rest. You never knew that your actions, repeated over and over became your hard-to-break bad habits. You finally come to the realization that, as the E.N.T. doctor told me when discussing the patients in bad health he'd see that day, you did all this to yourself, because you never replaced any of your bad habits with good habits.