

# Think Like Someone Who Retires Early

## Transcript

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Hi, I'm Glen Smith, CEO of GDS Wealth Management, and I've been a financial advisor for 22 years helping clients just like you.

Today we're going to talk about something that determines everything else: your mindset.

I once had a client say, “Glenn, I don't want to retire—I just want to wake up without an alarm clock.” And that stuck with me, because before you can retire, you have to start thinking like someone who can.

Today we're going to break down how to build wealth, buy back your time, and retire on your terms.

This is what I call the five-year plan.

After years of helping successful families plan for retirement, the five years before you retire are the most important of your financial life. You can do a lot of damage—or a lot of good—in that window, and most people don't realize how much control they actually have.

Retiring early is not about luck or timing the market. It's about three things: clarity, consistency, and the mindset shift away from accumulation to intention.

When you've built a few million in assets, the next stage is not about chasing returns anymore. It's about engineering the life that you actually want.

Think of it like a runway. Those five years before you take off are key to deciding how high and how far you'll fly.

One of the first conversations I have with a client is about redefining what retirement looks like. The traditional idea of stopping work at 65 and playing golf for 30 more years—it just doesn't fit anymore.

Most of my clients are business owners, executives, professionals. They don't want to quit. They want freedom—the ability to choose how they spend their days.

For one client, that meant consulting two days a week. For another, it was mentoring the next generation of young entrepreneurs. Another couple we worked with sold their business and now spend six months a year abroad.

The mindset shift is this: retirement is not about stopping—it's about starting something new, on your own terms.

When you view it that way, your five-year plan becomes about flexibility, not finality.

Now let's talk about time, because time is the real currency of retirement.

Here's something I often tell clients: you can always make more money, but you can't make more time.

So when we plan, I want you to start thinking about every financial decision as a time decision.

Do you want to spend more now for convenience and save less? Or do you want to optimize now and buy yourself more freedom later?

People who retire early think differently about returns. They're not just asking, "How much will my investments grow?" They're asking, "How much time will this buy me in the future?"

In other words, they measure success in years of freedom—not just returns on a statement.

Every decision—how they invest, what they spend, even where they live—is filtered through that lens: does this bring me closer to more time, flexibility, and choice?

That's what I call ROI: return on freedom.

Imagine if every dollar you invested was buying an extra day of choice. That's how early retirees think.

Here's another mindset shift: clarity beats complexity every time.

I've met clients with a dozen accounts, spreadsheets, multiple advisors—but no clear direction.

The ones who make real progress know exactly what they're building toward. They know their freedom number—that target amount that lets them live comfortably without relying on a paycheck.

Once we define that number, everything else gets easier.

Should we sell that rental? Should we accelerate mortgage payoff? How much risk should we really take with the portfolio?

Clarity is like turning on your headlights before driving at night. You see the road, stop second-guessing, and move forward confidently.

Let's be honest—the transition into retirement isn't just financial, it's emotional.

You've spent decades building, leading, achieving, and suddenly you're being told it's time to slow down. That's not easy for driven people.

So in this five-year window, we don't just plan for income and investments—we plan for purpose.

What will give you meaning once the title, the business, or the paycheck is no longer your identity?

My most fulfilled clients retire to something, not from something. That's a secret nobody really talks about.

One couple I worked with recently told me, "Hey Glenn, we didn't retire—we just rewired." And I like that, because that's really what this next chapter is all about.

So let's recap.

If you want to retire early, start by shifting your mindset.

First, think of time as your most valuable asset.

Second, redefine retirement as freedom—not an ending.

And most importantly, get crystal clear on your numbers and your purpose.

Your action steps for this week are simple:

Write down your freedom number—how much annual income you need to live your ideal life without relying on a paycheck.

Don't overthink it. This is just the starting point.

In future episodes, we'll dig into the mechanics—how to free up cash, invest efficiently, and turn that wealth into income.

But remember: your mindset sets the ceiling for your freedom.

Thank you for joining me. If you found this helpful, hit subscribe or share it with someone who's five years away from their next chapter.

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