

## From Retirement to Refire-ment (Two Wise “Takes” on Rekindling Your Artistic Gifts)

By definition, *retire* means to withdraw, lay down, and rest.

*Refire*, on the other hand, means to rekindle and reinvigorate (OK... you won't find this word in the dictionary... that's my definition!)

When I left my public school teaching position 13 years ago, I simultaneously experienced a “refire-ing” of my artistic skills. As someone in the midst of a second career as an artist, I hope this article encourages you to take two wise steps in anticipation of a renewed artistic phase in your life.

As a child, I loved to paint, draw, sing and write poetry, but as the weight of my career and family responsibilities took over my life, I set these all aside. This may have happened to you, too. With the support and encouragement of my husband, I left the classroom and launched out on a new creative path when my speaking ministry began. I've never regretted the decision. My early exit from my first career has been an unforgettable spiritual journey as I've watched the Lord lead me to dust off my old art supplies and “refire” creatively.

Whether you are thinking about refire-ing your artistic skills as a career move, serious past-time or casual hobby, one of the hardest aspects of the journey is simply knowing *where* to start. Perhaps you're on the brink of retirement and wondering how to rekindle your creative pursuits. Here are two wise tips I learned along the way of my “refire-ment” that may help you rekindle your artistic gifts as well:

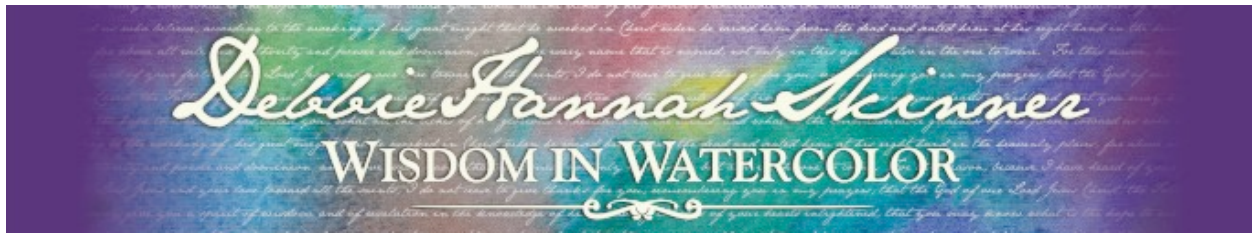


### Wise Tip #1: Take Lessons

I asked my husband for watercolor lessons as a Christmas gift when I started painting again (after a 25 year hiatus from watercolor). He did a little research and found a wonderful local art teacher who met with me for a series of 6 lessons to help me get started again.

“But, I'm on a retirement income now,” you may say. “How can I afford art lessons?”

If money is a problem, consider a barter arrangement. As a right-brained artistic type, I *welcome* the opportunity to trade art lessons for goods and services others have to offer. I've exchanged lessons for data entry, business plan development, catering at my



annual open house, and, even a hair cut or two. Assess your skill set and see if there is a service you can provide in exchange for lessons.

Art lessons are typically taught in a weekly series or as one- to five-day workshops. Community colleges, local art associations, and museums regularly offer workshops led by local and visiting artists. These are great ways to see how artists from different parts of the world create their art.

I encourage you to seek out teachers whose values and ethics are in line with yours. For example, I have no desire to create gory, “shock value,” or irreligious art that is an affront to Scripture, so I avoid art teachers who lean that direction. Many teaching artists have websites that allow you to get a taste for their work. Do a little research. Ask other artists in your area about the local or regional art teachers who have made a difference in their lives.

You will undoubtedly like some workshops better than others, but each one you attend will teach you something new (even if it’s “this medium or technique is not for me”--- that’s a valuable piece of information). Sometimes, you may discover a new technique or art supply to add to your repertoire through a workshop. Just be assured you will always learn *something*.

Here are a few of my favorite water media instructors you may want to look up:

Terry Madden of Florida (see on PBS)

Jo Beth Gilliam of Texas

Judy Betts of Louisiana

Cathy Quiel of California

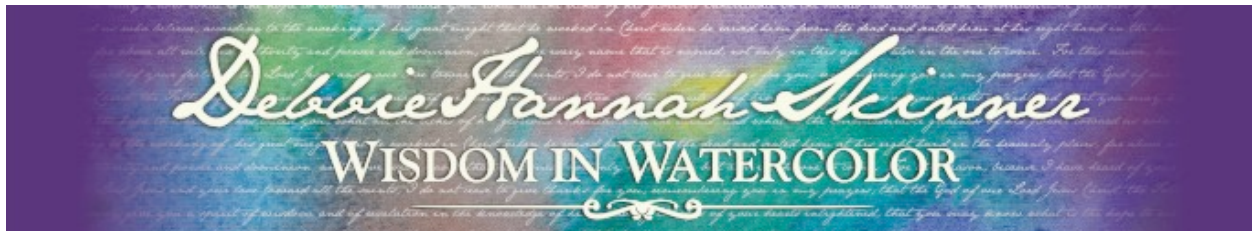
Robert Burrige of California

*(And, “Yes,” I teach occasional workshops, too! I’d love to paint with you some day. Make sure you’re on my e-newsletter list to receive notices about my workshop schedule.)*



## Wise Tip #2: Take Time

If “I’m too busy to paint” was a problem in your first career, it can happen again in your second--- the names of the excuses for not painting just change. I was amazed to see how quickly my calendar filled up when I left my full time job for the eclectic schedule of an artist. It can be easy to put aside your art for other things. That’s why making it a priority in your schedule is so important.



Whether it's scheduling a "paint together" with other artists or setting aside a specific time each week to make art, it's crucial that you make time to paint. Set paint dates for yourself on your calendar and protect that time. It's easier to say "no" to things that take you away from your art if you prioritize your painting time on your calendar.

In 1 Timothy 4:14 ESV, the Apostle Paul encouraged his young protege Timothy, "*Do not neglect the gift you have. . .*" I encourage you to give attention to your God-given artistic gifts.

Retirement is an exciting time of life packed with possibilities to pursue the creative passions you've put off and investigate interests you've postponed. By making the two wise choices of taking lessons and then taking time for you art (things I *wish* someone would have told me as I "refired"), you can make wise steps toward a fun and fulfilling "refire-ment."

Happy painting!