



THE HIGH CALLING OF OUR DAILY WORK

Is all Work a High Calling?

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Article:

Christians in the workplace often wonder if what they do has eternal value or significance. Is all work in answer to God's call? What about when work seems nonproductive or meaningless?

Let's put this in a Christian framework. God created work to be good. God works, and we are created in His image. When we work, we reflect His divine purpose and intent.

But we also live in a fallen world. So we can't give a blanket statement that all work is good. Some work is clearly bad. Some people's "work" is morally wrong or downright evil. Theft and embezzlement, abortion and murder, prostitution, and drug trafficking fall outside God's moral intent and plan.

Christians take heart that in Christ all work is redeemed and transformed. Virtually every job or profession is indeed a good and noble calling from God—and can reflect a divine purpose or intent for the world. Healthcare professionals, for example, reflect God's identity as healer and Great Physician. Lawyers stand for justice and defend the oppressed, and law enforcement officers reflect God's identity as judge and defender, refuge and shield. Christian judges, policemen, soldiers, and others participate in God's justice.

Extend this to nearly every profession. Teachers and educators convey God's wisdom and learning. Farmers, grocery store clerks, restaurateurs, cooks, and waiters participate in God's good work to feed the hungry. Architects, builders, contractors and real estate agents help people gain needed shelter. Consider your own job and line of work. How might it reflect some aspect of God's good character?

Given that work is inherently good or potentially redemptive, it is true that each of us can be called to our particular roles in it? Consider the parts of the body in 1 Corinthians 12. Some of us are eyes or ears, others are hands or feet. All of us are shaped, equipped, and gifted to particular effect. Specificity doesn't apply only to ministry in the church body; it also applies to our work. Some people may be called to be accountants or policy analysts; others may be called to operate a forklift or manage a mutual fund. And two people in the same job may have entirely different understandings of why God has called them to that role. But all of us can nevertheless be called.

And yet we ask: how do we know if we're called? While no pat answers exist, we can discern a sense of calling many ways, especially through the affirmation of trusted counsel and friends as well as our own experience of our work. It is almost a cliché to invoke Eric Liddell's line from Chariots of Fire—"God made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure"—but the truth remains that God created us in particular ways. We are most likely to sense God's call and feel His pleasure when we are using our gifts and abilities in areas that line up with who God created us to be.

Not that following God's call is always smooth and trouble-free. In many cases, a vocational calling involves a good degree of challenge, struggle, and even suffering. But we should still sense that this is what God is calling us to do, and that we are participating in God's good work. Such was the Apostle Paul's experience in his work, which was tremendously painful and yet deeply fulfilling. He was hard pressed but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair. Why? Because God had called him to his work; and, despite the hardships, he experienced an enduring sense of satisfaction.

Ultimately, seeing one's work as a calling depends on discerning the voice of the One who calls—and that is a matter of knowing God and learning to recognize His voice. We can be called to be a cook or a forest ranger or a policy analyst or hospice nurse or to a role in virtually any other field if we do it as a reflection of God's good work in the world and experience it as a satisfying expression of who He created us to be. The more we understand how God created us and how He thinks and loves, the more we will sense that we are doing what He has called us to do.

Read more of Al Hsu at TheSuburbanChristian.blogspot.com.